

Ready To Learn Transmedia Demonstration Station Study

A REPORT TO THE
CPB-PBS *READY TO LEARN* INITIATIVE



September 2012

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
RESEARCH APPROACH	4
FINDINGS	9
FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS	29
REFERENCES	32
APPENDICES	A-1

INTRODUCTION

The 2012 Transmedia Demonstration Stations program study is part of the multiyear CPB-PBS *Ready To Learn* summative evaluation initiative by Education Development Center, Inc., (EDC) and SRI International (SRI). Through a series of related studies, we are documenting, and, whenever possible, measuring the impact of PBS KIDS transmedia mathematics and literacy resources on the learning activities and outcomes of children from low-income families and their adult caregivers in early childhood classrooms, community settings, and at home.

The purpose of this context study is to understand better how national and local public media organizations with their local partners are implementing educational outreach activities in communities across the country where children, educators, and families are using PBS KIDS transmedia content. The PBS KIDS transmedia vision is that, by having digital videos and games and supplementary print resources featuring the same PBS KIDS characters and character environments, telling stories or visiting themes across technology platforms (televisions, laptops, tablets, and phones), and playing out in different settings, children will have opportunities to engage deeply with *Ready to Learn's* PBS KIDS content. Media producers, researchers, and increasingly educators are exploring how a transmedia orientation to production of and engagement with content can encourage high-quality learning experiences.

NATIONAL VISION FOR TRANSMEDIA OUTREACH

The Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB) and Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) in partnership with the U.S. Department of Education created the *Ready To Learn* Transmedia Demonstration Stations program to enhance early learning opportunities for children from low-income families, in part by providing training and support for their families, teachers, and other adult caregivers such as children’s librarians and afterschool providers. The program seeks to carry out this important work in collaboration with local public media stations (and statewide networks¹), asking these organizations to work with local partners to implement programs. Through this national-to-neighborhood partnership arrangement, CPB and PBS intend to ensure that new PBS KIDS transmedia math and literacy resources developed by producers have the best chance of reaching children growing up and getting ready for school in the communities of relative economic and/or social disadvantage.

Serving these audiences is not new for organizations in the public media community. Many stations have an abiding commitment to what the public media system describes as “educational outreach,” which involves providing a range of programs and services to educators, children, and their families over and above broadcasting or distributing video-based programming. Stations follow different models of outreach; some provide trainings and workshops directly, while others work together with community partners who lead the way in providing services. Some stations seek to serve the largest possible number of people, while other stations try to work as deeply as possible with the same audience members over time.

Models of outreach supported by the CPB-PBS *Ready To Learn Initiative* also have evolved over time. In previous years, a workshop-centered model sought to provide individual workshops for families on supporting children’s learning (particularly literacy development) by encouraging a sequence of activities that included media viewing, book reading, and activities that parents and children could do together. Over the years, thousands of adults participated in these workshops. More recently CPB-PBS’s *Ready To Learn Raising Readers Initiative* endorsed a different model of outreach, which encouraged stations to form or strengthen local partnerships in specific low-income communities and through more in-depth hands-on learning experiences such as summer camps, after school programs, and online courses for teachers.

¹ Throughout this report, we use “stations” to refer to both independent public media organizations as well as statewide networks.

CPB's 2011 Transmedia Demonstration Station call for proposals reflects a continued focus on this second model of outreach. CPB identified five essential goals as follows:

- Stations work in close collaboration with formal education institutions like schools and organizations that provide out-of-school-time learning opportunities.
- Stations and their partners provide activities for children from low-income families that are enriched by PBS KIDS transmedia content.
- Stations and their partners work with the families, teachers, and caregivers of children from low-income families to nurture their capacity to support math and literacy learning with PBS KIDS transmedia content.
- Stations use their media forums to communicate with stakeholders about PBS KIDS transmedia resources and their effectiveness.
- Stations cultivate local resources and develop strategies for sustaining and scaling PBS KIDS transmedia outreach activities.

CPB and PBS also enlisted producers and national partners to ensure that stations had access to a variety of PBS KIDS transmedia resources to use in their outreach work. PBS KIDS Lab (<http://pbskids.org/lab>) is a specially designed website for parents and educators that features all of the PBS KIDS Content from the 2010-2013 RTL Initiative. Resources include suites of digital games associated with PBS KIDS programs including *Curious George*, *Dinosaur Train*, *FETCH! With Ruff Ruffman*, *Fizzy's Lunch Lab*, *Sid the Science Kid*, *SuperWhy!*, *The Cat in the Hat Knows A Lot About That!*, and *The Electric Company*. PBS also provided stations with home activities, classroom activities, and out-of-school activities through the PBS KIDS Lab website. CPB also provided hands-on curriculum supplements from producers like *The Electric Company's* afterschool and summer learning materials and from national partners like the Chicago Public Schools Early Childhood Education's *Virtual PreK Ready for Math*. Finally, CPB provided stations with direct support and consultation, and arranged for the National Summer Learning Association and the Collaborative for Building After-School Systems.

RESEARCH APPROACH

After reviewing the proposals and plans for all participating public media stations in winter 2012, EDC and SRI conducted studies of five stations selected by CPB and PBS to participate in the Transmedia Demonstration Stations program's initial cohort over the spring and summer. Working closely with CPB and PBS, we selected a sample of five sites that varied across a range of factors such as outreach strategy, types of partners, target population, and types of communities served. Choosing sites in this way enabled us to select an illustrative diversity of stations, for which we were able to document the stations' aspirations, observe the challenges they faced, and highlight the strategies they perceived to be most effective.²

This study extended the approach taken in research conducted by EDC and SRI at the conclusion of the earlier CPB-PBS *Ready To Learn Raising Readers* initiative. As in that research, our focus was not on assessing or measuring outcomes. Instead, we attempted to highlight "the potential for achieving positive results, given the nature and strength of selected outreach efforts" (Llorente et al., 2010). This study, therefore, used the five cases to illustrate some ways in which stations might conduct outreach that best serves their communities. As such, the approach taken here was similar to cross-case analysis (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2009), meta-ethnography (Noblit & Hare, 1988), and other qualitative approaches (e.g., Patton, 2001; Penuel, 2010) well suited to describing the general features of successful practices and programs, derived from specific examples of how these strategies can and do work.

Our intent for this report is that it will help guide future public media educational outreach efforts, assist funders seeking to understand the opportunities and challenges public media stations face, and provide advice and support to bolster the outreach efforts of stations with less experience in offering these types of services.

² Intentional or purposive sampling such as this is a standard practice in the type of comparative case study research we have conducted (Patton, 2001; Yin, 2009).

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

We asked the following research questions in this study:

1. To what extent and in what ways are *Ready To Learn* Demonstration Stations, including statewide networks, working with schools and other community partners to implement programs enhanced with PBS KIDS transmedia resources?
2. To what extent do the programs that the *Ready To Learn* Demonstration Stations and their partners implement allow children ages two to eight from low-income families to engage with PBS KIDS transmedia resources?
3. To what extent and in what ways are *Ready To Learn* Demonstration Stations engaging the parents, caregivers, and teachers of these children in ways that might enhance their ability to support children's math and literacy learning?
4. To what extent and in what ways are the *Ready To Learn* Demonstration Stations' activities creating opportunities to communicate with stakeholders about new PBS KIDS transmedia materials and resources?
5. How are *Ready To Learn* Demonstration Stations working to scale and sustain outreach activities beyond the current *Ready To Learn* awards?

RESEARCH METHODS

To answer these questions, researchers from the summative evaluation team designed a study that reviewed documents from all 11 stations to select a subset of five stations for in-depth phone interviews and three stations for site visits with stations and partners.

To select stations for the study, we conducted a document review of all 11 demonstration stations' proposals and plans and made short, fact-finding calls to three stations to round out the document review process. The review focused on the stations' implementation schedule, target population demographics, degree and type of parental involvement, and types of partners involved. We used this information, along with background knowledge gathered from face-to-face contact with station staff at *Ready To Learn* meetings and our communications with CPB, in order to select a diverse set of five stations for the phone interviews.

With these five public media stations, we conducted 90- to 120-minute telephone interviews with the staff charged with leading and carrying out *Ready To Learn* outreach work. The stations and their projects were as follows:

Iowa Public Television: Iowa Public Television (IPTV) worked with libraries, schools, public health organizations, faith-based organizations, afterschool programs, and other groups in two communities (Waterloo and Storm Lake), providing technology resources such as laptops, netbooks, and tablets. Children used PBS KIDS transmedia games in afterschool settings, libraries, and some classrooms. IPTV also reached out to families directly, talking about the benefits of PBS resources.

Montana PBS: Montana PBS worked to integrate PBS KIDS transmedia into afterschool and library programs and elementary schools on the Flathead Reservation. Their work included helping those programs to purchase technology and training teachers and program leaders on the PBS KIDS transmedia, while allowing them freedom to implement the resources as best fit their population's needs.

KBTC: KBTC, in Tacoma, Washington, partnered with a local housing authority that provides families with housing and encourages stability for children, incentivizing staying in place and at the same school. With partners, the station offered a "spring break" camp and summer learning program for those children. KBTC also partnered with other organizations in the neighborhood such as the Boys & Girls Club, the Tacoma Metro Parks Department, and the Children's Museum to infuse PBS KIDS transmedia into their programming.

WGBY: WGBY's, in Springfield Massachusetts, primary focus was the opening of a neighborhood center, the North End Center for Literacy and Learning (NECLL), in a local school. NECLL, set up to be comfortable for children and adults, became a tech-filled gathering space for community organizations and WGBY. It also engaged a group of young adults, the Digital Ambassadors who, together with the WGBY education coordinator, went out to preschools, afterschool programs, and summer programs to deliver PBS KIDS transmedia programming.

WNET: WNET in New York's Lower East Side and Harlem's neighborhoods, was focused on providing professional development. The station worked closely with an elementary school and a community center associated with the housing authority, offering professional development for teachers on integrating PBS KIDS transmedia into the classroom. It also worked with Head Start, both on integration of PBS KIDStransmedia and family outreach, and provided parent education via a Mommy-and-Me program at a local school.

We also conducted interviews with several of *Ready To Learn's* national partners and with PBS and CPB project leaders, to document their understanding, expectations, and goals for the program.

Based on phone interviews, station implementation schedules, and close consultation with CPB, we selected three stations to be further analyzed and featured in the final phase of the study, with two- to three-day site visits. The stations selected were Iowa Public Television, KBTC (Tacoma, Washington), and WGBY (Springfield, Massachusetts). We selected them with the goal of including stations that represented a variety of demographics and activity types. We also chose on the basis of the likelihood that a station's model could be used by other stations rather than being too specific to a particular context. During these visits, we interviewed station staff involved in *Ready To Learn* work, station leaders, and staff and leaders at partner organizations. We also observed *Ready To Learn* outreach and dissemination events. In total, we conducted 30 interviews and eight, hour-long program observations.

DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES AND ANALYSIS

Though we began with a review of all 11 *Ready To Learn* demonstration stations, only the five selected for phone interviews or in-person visits are included in the analysis for this report.

Interview protocols included a variety of topics, based on the study's research questions, which addressed the following issues:

- Station goals and administration of its *Ready To Learn* project
- Key partnerships and collaborations
- Community and target audiences
- Programs and services for children, families/guardians, and educators
- Outcomes, scaling, and sustainability

The protocols were designed to be flexible, allowing interviewers to adapt questions to the role and responsibilities of the person being interviewed and the context in which s/he worked. Finally, an observation protocol allowed researchers to record field notes for any CPB-PBS *Ready To Learn* events they attended. (See [Appendix A: National Partner Interview Protocol](#) for copies of these instruments.)

Pairs of researchers completed the five phone interviews with stations after attending a training on the protocol led by study leaders. A single researcher conducted interviews with CPB, PBS, and national partners. Researchers took notes during interviews and/or audio-recorded interviews to ensure accuracy in data collection.

For site visits, study leaders coordinated meetings with station staff, selecting a subset of the stations' partners with whom to speak and times to visit when *Ready To Learn* events were being held. Study leaders conducted a 2-hour training with fellow researchers on the interview and observation protocols. Site visits included two to three researchers in order to maximize the number of people with whom we could speak during the visit. After the site visits, researchers finalized their interview notes and used them as the basis for completing a station debrief form, which summarized findings on important topics and themes across interviews and observations. For those two stations with which we spoke but did not conduct site visits, researchers completed the same debrief form on the basis of the phone interview only.

After the phone interviews and visits to stations were completed, researchers met to debrief initial findings from each station and to identify a set of themes (for example, characteristics of partnerships, services for specific audiences, and plans for scaling and sustainability) across sites to further explore in subsequent analyses. Two researchers then analyzed the station debrief forms for each station as well as the national partner interviews, using the themes as a guide for writing analysis memos. These analysis memos formed the basis of the findings below.

FINDINGS

The following section describes our findings from the five *Ready To Learn* transmedia demonstration stations included in this study. The findings are organized thematically and aligned to study research questions. Regarding partnerships, we describe the range of local partners with whom CPB, PBS, and study stations collaborated, how these organizations worked together, and the types of services provided for children, parents/guardians, and teachers. We then share information about the difference that these programs made for target audience members from the stations' and partners' perspective, and how they felt the demonstration station activities had impact on the way they work.

In the next subsection, we describe findings related to the PBS KIDS transmedia resources and the strategy of using them as a centerpiece in outreach activities. Beyond describing stations' and partners' responses to the assets and reporting their ideas for enhancing or strengthening future resources, we share how stations see that these resources and approach are well matched to trends they have observed in their communities and their aspirations for future educational outreach activities.

Last, we report on how, stations and their partners plan to continue their outreach with PBS KIDS transmedia content, and sustain and scale their efforts, both through new resource development and by integrating this work into other ongoing efforts.

PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATION

Stations collaborated with many different partners to provide programs and services to children from low-income families and the adults who care for them.

Stations responded to the guidance from CPB and PBS on collaboration by inviting a targeted alliance of new and existing partners from their local communities to participate in the *Ready To Lean* Transmedia Demonstration Stations program. While the program called for stations to work with formal learning institutions (like public schools) and out-of-school organizations, the list of partners named by study stations shows that a diverse set of organizations were involved in providing services. Across the five communities, Transmedia Demonstration Station Partners included the following types of organizations:

- Local libraries
- Boys and Girls Clubs affiliates
- YMCA and YWCA affiliates
- Public elementary schools
- Local Head Start Centers and preschool centers
- State Head Start or public preschool agencies
- Independent afterschool providers
- Regional afterschool providers
- Independent childcare centers
- State library agencies
- Public housing authorities
- Children's museums
- Citizen's groups
- Community development agencies
- Parks and recreation departments
- Faith-based social service providers
- Community health agencies
- Community colleges
- Housing advocacy and development organizations

While none of the five stations worked with every type of partner listed above, they typically had a range of partners. The Transmedia Demonstration Stations program required partners to work with two Title I schools, four summer programs, and four afterschool programs. Stations were allowed to use the same partners to fulfill multiple obligations (e.g., a YMCA would suffice for a summer and afterschool program). Some stations noted that it was challenging to work with the partners required. They had to stretch their staff's abilities to satisfy the requirements of the contract and indicated that, in future efforts, a smaller number of partners could allow for more intense and impactful work. The difficulty was one of scale, rather than focus, according to stations. The resources available did not match the ambition that most stations had for the project. One station outreach leader's reflection matched what other stations shared with researchers: "Suggesting that

a station have nine partners, or more, was biting off more than we can chew. It would have been great to do more with a smaller group, [rather] than to have to do a small amount with all the partners. It was daunting to try to serve all our partners.”

There was one notable exception. The Montana PBS outreach leader reported she was fortunate in selecting the community her contract focused on and stated, “It had both boundaries and broadband. Boundaries in the sense that there was a defined population that was served by the same set of institutions indicated in the call for proposals (schools, libraries, Head Start centers, and afterschool programs) with whom we already had a relationship.”

Stations enhanced or extended outreach commitments years in the making by collaborating with local agency networks with deep connections to targeted communities.

Stations’ work within this contract was not just to create new partnerships but to build on existing ones. According to leaders from CPB and PBS, one way that a station could succeed in reaching key organizations was by “bringing coalitions together, [or] inserting itself into an existing campaign. Connecting the dots. Bringing together, what no single organization can do by itself.” As well, stations needed to work across boundaries within their own walls: “[Education departments] can’t be siloed in their own organizations, they need to be in a place where the education staff are integral to the leadership of the station.” By intention and selection into the program, the majority of study stations had a long-established commitment to educational outreach and shared several common characteristics. First, they each had at least one full-time staff member responsible for providing public media information and resources to educators. Second, these stations tended to combine both contract and station funds to support their outreach work over the years. Finally, the stations tended to have preexisting relationships that included intermediary organizations like the state library or school districts, as well as local partners like individual schools, libraries, and youth-serving community-based organizations.

Two stations, WNET and KBTC, incorporated PBS KIDS Transmedia Outreach activities into work they were already doing with the support of philanthropic organizations that support educational initiatives. Both stations were engaged with multiyear programs supported by family foundations. In New York, the participating partners already were focused on early literacy learning, making it a logical extension for the coalition to include a new focus on PBS KIDS transmedia resources and mathematics. In Tacoma, a coalition of partners were working to support success for families in a particular neighborhood and school community by providing a coordinated set of services that includes affordable housing, case work, and a coordinated set of formal and informal education services. This larger coalition was glad to have new resources and additional support from KBTC for their work together provided through the *Ready To Learn* transmedia demonstration contract.

Stations organized their projects so they acted as supporters and organizers for their partners or provided direct services with partners.

The ways in which stations and their partners organized and took responsibility for working together to serve their target audiences had a strong influence on the type of programming offered and the intended benefits for children and adults. The ways that stations engaged with their partners usually fit one of two distinct models of partnership: stations as supporters and organizers or stations providing direct services with partners.

SUPPORTERS AND ORGANIZERS

Most study stations described indirect support as their principal responsibility: making their partners aware of the range of PBS KIDS transmedia games and curriculum supplements that were available, providing training and as-needed technical support, and, sometimes, helping make sure that partners were working with one another as needed to best serve children and/or adults.

In this approach, station education leaders trusted their partners to select resources and decide when, where, and how to use them. The Montana PBS station outreach leader explained, “I see myself as a provider of resources and information that partners can deliver to children, families, and educators in whatever form they think is best for their local community...we did not set out with a definitive, ‘Here is how we want you to use these’ [resources].” At KBTC, outreach leaders emphasized their role was to “broker informed decisionmaking [about resources and programming], not use our ‘expertise’ to tell educators and parents how to do their jobs.”

Station outreach leaders explained that when partners were skilled and experienced at gathering resources from different sources and designing and delivering activities, this model of partnership worked well. An outreach leader in Iowa described how one afterschool partner exemplified this skillfulness: “Lara³ knows how to do this. She doesn’t rely solely on technology to teach math skills. She’s got these third- and fourth-graders, she takes them aside the week before, [and says,] ‘Next week, you’re working with your kindergarten partners on shapes. We’re going to do these games [on PBS KIDS Lab]. You test them out now. You learn how they work. Next Monday, you’ll work with your kindergarten partner on these games and on Wednesday, you will do hands-on shape activities.’” She continued, “If you had a teacher that thought, ‘Just

³ Pseudonym.

let kindergarteners go on PBS KIDS and then we're good. Easy solution, pop them on there,' then there's some miscommunication." This same afterschool director reflected that she thought it was necessary to take responsibility for "making connections between PBS KIDS Lab and the needs of kids." In deciding how best to use the PBS KIDS transmedia resources, she prepared ahead of time by looking at the online math games her station partner had told her about, then "considering what teachers were doing and what kids were interested in, and decid[ing] how best to make it all align in the program."

PARENT SERVICES

Less frequently, stations collaborated with partners to provide services directly to children and families. WGBY was the study station that used this approach the most. WGBY leaders described jointly creating and running a community learning center (North End Center for Literacy and Learning) at a local school. They also used a model of outreach where college student Digital Ambassadors, employed by the station, worked intensively with children at partner sites.

In Iowa, IPTV outreach leaders also used this approach. They facilitated a session focused on early mathematics at a special event for approximately 375 Title I parents/guardians and children at a partner school. With so many attendees, the hosts used the library, the gym, and other big areas of the school to set up three activity areas that families would move through in waves. Station outreach leaders activity featured the Chicago Public Schools Virtual PreK: Ready for Math Family Feet activity (in which adults and children use different family member's feet as nonstandard units of measure). The station outreach leader explained, "It was 7:30 at night, some families had come straight from their jobs, many still wearing their steel toed work boots, and here they were tracing their feet, talking with their kids about math and measurement. They were doing the activity. That's powerful."

SERVING CHILDREN

In their proposals and work plans, study stations identified specific populations of children, ages two to eight, growing up in lower-income families with whom they intended to work. Most also were from different minority communities including Latino families in Springfield, Massachusetts; Native American families in Montana; and immigrants from around the world in Iowa. Programs for children were enacted in a variety of settings, including schools, libraries, independent youth development agencies, and public parks.

Station partners typically offered two types of programs for children: those with higher structure and adult mediation, and those that were more casual and free-play oriented that allowed children to create their own experiences.

STRUCTURED PROGRAMS

Stations and their partners described programs or activities in which adults provided support and facilitation intended to encourage children to engage in extended play with PBS KIDS transmedia resources.

For WGBY, extended play activities occurred during twice-monthly visits to the area preschool, afterschool, and summer program partners. During these visits, the Digital Ambassadors paired up with children and worked with them individually for short periods. One of the Ambassadors explained, “On their own, preschool kids are really good at exploring different games, sometimes many different games. They change games a lot. When we work with them, we get them to play at least three rounds of a game before they change.” In this way, when children work with these adults, they have a chance to play individual games for longer periods of time, increasing the practice they have with particular skills. The Ambassador continued, “Kids have trouble starting out with games, but they eventually get the hang of it. You need to work with some kids more before they can level up. Another ambassador explained that children will seek support when they are playing together, “Kids get comfortable asking for help from us. When something goes wrong, they ask us right away. We encourage them to play and we count with them, or if a game asks for a word that starts with ‘C’ we’ll suggest ‘cat’ or ‘catch.’”

FREE-PLAY ORIENTED PROGRAMS/ UNSTRUCTURED PROGRAMS

Some station partners used the PBS KIDS transmedia resources primarily to provide children with games to play during unstructured or free-play periods. In these cases, children commonly encountered the resources in largely unsupported contexts where there was limited to no adult mediation.

An afterschool program at a library in Iowa represents a typical example. Researchers observed a drop-in session that began with the children's librarian reading a book to preschool- and early-elementary aged children whose families had brought them in to the library that day. When the book reading was finished, she let the children know they could continue the fun by playing "PBS games" on the 12 netbook mobile lab (purchased with project funds). The netbook computers represented a significant increase from the two computers the library had available for children to use previously. The children migrated from the reading circle to where the computers were arranged on tables. Over the next hour, they decided which games to play and for how long. They mostly played on their own though some siblings played together. The mobile lab did not have headphones that day, so everyone had the sound on, but turned down. When children indicated they were having trouble, either technical or conceptual, the librarian and other adults in the room dropped by to help, for example, offering advice or helping with navigation or interface difficulties. The librarian's engagement was light, and she seldom engaged with a particular child for more than a minute or two. Children appeared to enjoy themselves, for the most part, though they tended to hop from game to game every few minutes. They played with the games, but did not always play in ways that helped them advance through game levels or achieve other goals the games' designers may have had in mind. A few children, as one might expect, were the exception and played in a careful focused way for long stretches of time. When the hour was done, the children knew how to reset the computers so they would be ready for the next session.

SERVING FAMILIES, TEACHERS, AND CAREGIVERS

Study stations and their partners created opportunities for adult engagement in order to enhance the educational benefits for children and families as a whole.

Station outreach leaders believe that no adult is better positioned to support a child's learning and development than a parent or guardian. As a result, station representatives tended to speak in strong terms when describing why they focused considerable effort on reaching families and how they went about it. One general manager characterized the commitment to parents and families this way: "To me, if we get families [involved], whether they are reading or doing math or learning to play the flute, I don't care. It's a cliché but true that success of a child in school is directly related to attention they are given by a caring adult. [What's important is] just getting parents involved in their child's education. Educators are often complaining that many parents feel education is the school's job; what's great about [our project] and these tools is that it's getting parents to buy into their child's education."

Several stations described events in which they engaged whole families, including parents, grandparents and children, all at the same time, and how these activities were successful in engaging and exciting participants. Montana PBS staff described an event for families held at a local library on the Flathead Indian Reservation where there was an interactive whiteboard, eight laptops, and five tablet computers set up ready to go with games from the *Curious George* suite. "This was eye-opening! Both kids and adults took to the games right off. Kids were more apt to go to the Smart Board than parents, and we think that was because it was so 'public'—[parents] would stand close and watch their kids, even making suggestions of how they should play the games, but very little hands-on themselves. Parents and kids would sit at the laptops and work together. We saw lots of great coaching and parenting going on; very engaged parents and grandparents."

While some stations focused on high-impact events like these, others aimed to engage families over time, with the goal of having more intense and extended interactions that could best encourage families' support for children's learning and children's use of PBS KIDS transmedia resources at home. WGBY went to great lengths to organize and recruit parents/guardians to participate in regular Dinners-on-Us events where meals were provided along with discussions of technology, media, and learning, and the opportunity to engage in fun learning activities. WNET worked with a Mommy-and-Me program at a local school in New York City which offered a multiweek program that incorporated PBS KIDS transmedia content and technology. The program was scheduled to take place weekly, October through June, right after mothers dropped their children off at school. In total, about 10 to 12

families participated, though most not every week. Despite the modest number of participants, WNET and its partner felt that the experience, which was focused mostly on “young parents who need all the support they can get,” provided them with “a leg-up.” The partner noted, “The program is growing and working because the resources are good.”

Stations worked successfully with some elementary and preschool teachers, though the timing and duration of the contract and restrictions on teachers’ schedules made it difficult to collaborate as much or as well as originally envisioned.

While all study stations had high hopes of working intensely with schools, administrators, and teachers to enrich school day lessons with PBS KIDS transmedia resources, nearly all stations experienced some challenge in working with these partners because of the project’s contract schedule. The contract’s time frame and 1-year duration did not match well with professional development schedules and school planning meetings, which are generally scheduled many months in advance. Stations also reported that it was sometimes difficult for schools, administrators, and teachers, who are bound by curriculum requirements and strict accountability processes, to incorporate the PBS KIDS transmedia content.

The station outreach leader at Montana PBS, for example, reported that by the end of the past school year her partners had “enthusiastically integrated RTL transmedia resources into their school and summer programming,” but early in the contract, she worried that she had “let her partners down,” because she wasn’t providing materials enough in advance to maximize their integration and usefulness for the current school year. WGBY staff explained that teacher professional development was something they could not be spontaneous about scheduling; the public schools had already set their professional development schedules prior to the demonstration station contract start dates and could not accommodate the station. Far from discouraged, WGBY station leaders were sticking with their plan to engage with schools and teachers over the longer term. “We’re on their schedule this month to try and plan for next year.” However, the uncertainty generated by year-to-year funding cycles means they still may not be able to participate in the coming year.

In the case of one station, the city school calendar was less of an issue than the school improvement obligations that partner schools had under state and federal education rules. Station outreach leaders explained, “We haven’t had a lot of contact with teachers; we’ve focused on afterschool and summer. That’s at the request of the school. We talked to the principal, but he said they are so focused on their curriculum and improving performance on state standards and sticking to the curriculum, [that] they felt it needed to be afterschool.”

The challenges were different in working with preschool teachers; though they were often willing to participate, stations found that they had little time available for training or professional development, were less familiar with technology, and had “further to go” in integrating it into their instructional day.

A station, working with a group of Head Start centers in their target community, indicated, “There was almost no time for professional development where we could work with them.” The station outreach leader indicated that these preschool educators had not used any technology in their classes before, let alone tablets or interactive whiteboards, so there was the additional issue that there was not a lot of familiarity to build on, and there were concerns on the part of the Head Start director that use of the PBS KIDS transmedia resources would not be sustainable. Some preschool instructors working with WGBY indicated that they did not feel they needed professional development on media and technology integration, since the station’s Digital Ambassadors were working one-on-one with children in the classroom. Instructors saw their primary role during the time that “the tablet people” were in room as classroom management; they wanted to leave space for the Ambassadors to “do their job.”

Stations tended to report having more success working with out-of-school-time educators and librarians. Typically, they would provide support to these professionals through hands-on workshops where station outreach leaders brought together large meetings that included both organization leaders such as afterschool program directors and frontline educators. KBTC supplemented this type of training event with an intensive training from the National Summer Learning Association (a CPB-PBS *Ready To Learn* national partner) and with a Skype-based training with developers of The Electric Company summer and afterschool programs at Sesame Workshop. The high quality of these trainings was such that one program director insisted that all her staff be trained: “I just liked the program so much, I had all my staff trained in case someone’s position changed or if someone left. Now anyone can take over teaching the program.” This is important because it plans to offer a version of the summer program during the afterschool hours during the coming school year.

REPORTED IMPACTS

Reflecting on their PBS KIDS transmedia outreach activities, stations and their partners saw much excitement and lasting enthusiasm as evidence of the project's value.

Stations and their partners described seeing increases in excitement and enthusiasm from children and adults who participated in PBS KIDS transmedia-centered outreach activities. A WGBY staff member explained, “The kids are really excited about playing the games. Even after several months of visits [to afterschool programs, summer programs, and preschool classrooms], the kids are still excited. We haven't hit that wall yet.”

The director of an out-of-school program in Tacoma explained that she knew the programs were worthwhile because they did not have to cajole children to participate. She explained, “[We know that] what we're offering has value because we don't have to force the kids to participate in the activities or go to the PBS sites. The kids get up and run to *The Electric Company* lessons. The kids love it and the staff doesn't have to do anything special to keep the kids interested.” Another KBTC partner described how the PBS KIDS transmedia activities, in this case a mobile lab that's part of a day-long recreation program in a park, “gives the kids a break from the general park games and gives them something else to do in their day. It brings the kids' spirits up to be able to be a part of something so new and fun.”

This consistent talk of excitement and fun may be important, according to another KBTC partner, because it means that children and their families may choose “educational materials” instead of purely entertaining alternatives. “I like that these [resources] can help the kids make a good choice. They now choose a PBS or *The Electric Company* game rather than a blood and guts game. To have the kids choose a better route to learning, that's great.”

Station staff believe children were developing specific math and literacy skills; likewise children's attitudes and behavior improved after engaging in outreach activities.

While no assessments were conducted to measure children's skill or knowledge development, outreach staff and partners from most stations described how they thought their work was helping children learn. They cited examples of observing children improving in a specific skill as a result of engaging with the PBS KIDS transmedia-centered activities. A WGBY station leader gave an example of a little girl playing a *Fetch! with Ruff Ruffman* game for telling time who said, “I never understood telling time until today.”

A children’s librarian in Iowa explained that when she observed children playing, she was able to see them “learn numbers, count higher and higher, beyond 10, and get better at sequencing and ordering. The games target those skills and you can see kids learning them as they play.” She also emphasized that children are making connections between the games and other parts of their lives. She cited an example where a child made a connection between the *Curious George* game Meatball Launcher, and a book she found a shelf at the library, *Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs*.⁴

An out-of-school-time program leader from Tacoma explained how she had become accustomed to kids approaching her, eager to share what they have learned: “[The kids] spit back at you what they learned that day. They’ve been doing it since we started the program. And they’re retaining things they learn. Shapes, numbers, animals, Pranksters, you name it.”

Beyond academic skills, KBTC station outreach leaders described how at least one boy’s Spring Break camp experience changed the way he approached educational settings before coming into camp, “We talked to principal and counselor at the school; they were most concerned about Thomas.⁴ The school [would] sometimes call his dad two to three times a day [to report problems with his behavior]. But at camp he was the opposite: completely engaged, involved in what was happening, having so much fun. The first day, I said to his dad, ‘Hey let me talk to you about Thomas.’ He thought I was going to say bad things. When I told him the opposite, he said, ‘I’ve never been told Thomas was good at anything.’ The next week at school, Thomas got a good citizen/good behavior award—his first ever. And it wasn’t just him, four other kids from camp got their first good citizen/good behavior awards too. That’s what we want to see from kids. That kind of change.”

Stations came to understand the particular needs of their communities better and worked together across station departments because of PBS KIDS transmedia outreach programming.

By design, the demonstration station program was intended to be a highly local outreach effort, which guided the work of each station and the partnerships it formed. According to CPB leaders, “A demonstration station has to have a set of relationships and an intense focus on place. This sense of being committed to and deeply rooted in a target community reinforces the goal of being committed to a particular low-income neighborhood or community, and providing services over time so partners and target audiences can depend on station engagement.” For the stations in our sample, the activities they undertook during the contract served to deepen their understanding of their local community and the partnerships they had with local organizations.

⁴ Pseudonym.

A station general manager explained that additional support for outreach increases what the station can learn about communities it serves, and helps it better serve the needs of these communities. “[Initiatives] like this give us a chance to really know communities deeply in a way we couldn’t have before because we couldn’t have afforded it. Gives us a sense of what’s needed, and helps us fashion responses to that need. Once [the educational outreach team has] the sense of the landscape, the needs, how they can be met by public media, then we get a sense of what should be a focus of what we do.”

A leader at WGBY indicated that the program had provided encouragement for departments within the station to work together in new ways: “The *Ready To Learn* program is a partnership between our Education and Community Engagement departments—something they haven’t been able to do in the past. And this has not only allowed for collaboration but also bridging resources internally.”

PBS KIDS TRANSMEDIA STRATEGY AND MATERIALS

Stations reported that having PBS KIDS interactive games, television programs, and print materials fit with how families use resources and also helped make the case that stations provide valuable educational resources beyond broadcast.

While opinion about the term “transmedia” was mixed—one partner, for example, felt the word was jargon—most station general managers and educational outreach leaders described how having PBS KIDS transmedia resources to share through outreach activities was a benefit because it matches the patterns of media engagement they are seeing in the families they work with. A station education leader put it this way: “Transmedia is heading in the right direction—that’s where our families are moving. In our Kids Advisory panels, children talked about playing games online and on their mom’s iPhone. And it connects with what they watch on TV, too.”

The WGBY general manager felt strongly that the PBS KIDS transmedia strategy and resources were helpful in expanding the view of what public media stations can provide to communities and to their partners: “I was really happy we got this [initiative] and were able to start this program... people think of public TV and think about [broadcast] programming. When I ask what they would like us to do in education, they say, ‘You could do a [television] program on ‘X.’ We know that’s not going to really help. We have many other tools, ways we can help, not just the TV screen. A good thing about transmedia, it shows [public media] using the content in different ways.”

Stations and partners reported that PBS KIDS transmedia resources were beneficial because they supported partnership development, helped build a bridge between learning environments, and provided children with new ways to engage.

CPB and PBS leaders envisioned themselves, stations, and their partners to comprise a learning community that is creating new knowledge about educational outreach and using PBS KIDS transmedia resources to support engagement and learning. As one leader explained, “Stations are helping us imagine how to implement not just television, but also interactive gaming and content, using tools not really used in outreach before.” In this spirit, some station partners described increased confidence in the appropriateness and relative value of educational technology and media after participating in demonstration station programs. They described the importance of children learning to use technology for learning, as well as learning from technology-rich experiences.

Most stations’ partners reported having generally positive reactions to the RTL transmedia games available through PBS KIDS Lab. An afterschool leader in a small Iowa town said she especially appreciated that related resources were available on different platforms: children could access them on the computers in her program, and IPTV staff “came to family night and showed parents the website plus all the different possibilities” so they could use them at home as well. A KBTC outreach leader explained that having PBS KIDS transmedia and technology hardware resources to offer made it easier to build connections with partners and establish that the station could be a valuable partner and source of information: “Once partners see the resources and see kids playing, they think they are better than any other educational game out there. Plus, they are free, and they are from the station and PBS KIDS!”

Some partners that were initially hesitant came around to seeing that technology use could be beneficial for children’s learning. A children’s librarian in an Iowa city, who was new to working with public media, was initially reluctant to include the online games: “The best way to put it, I was a little leery. I wondered if games could really compete with everyday ‘shooting’ games. So I was pleasantly surprised [that RTL games did]. If [children are] going to game, they should game in a way that teaches them something, like these do.” She appreciated that the games were “very appropriate for kids—nonviolent and kid friendly,” and thought that having videos, games, and online resources that featured the same characters as in television shows lent the resources trustworthiness with families and made them more attractive to adults and children. “Because they’re connected to PBS shows, parents are already familiar with characters in the game. It’s great to have connections between different media—games, websites, TV shows.”

A KBTC partner in Tacoma had a similar experience. He explained that he initially had some ambivalence about including what he called “online learning” as part of the coalition’s larger set

of services, worrying that too much technology would crowd out valuable interactions between people. However, he came to see that technology experiences and social interactions could go together, and that the positive associations children had with PBS KIDS characters could motivate children to be more engaged in learning activities. He explained, “I’m not a fan of substituting online learning for interaction, but the model we worked out was a compromise—people sitting together to do the games online. That way, it helped the kids with what they were doing online and helped them relate it to what they were doing throughout the day. If you have a sufficiently motivating program—and the PBS KIDS characters give kids that—then you can be much more successful with integrating online learning with human interacting learning.”

The view that “technology is where the whole world is going,” and that “if kids learn technical skills now it will benefit them in the future,” was expressed frequently by station staff and partners. A staff member at a Springfield preschool program explained, “So now I think the more you can expose [kids to technology], the younger, the better. The more advanced they’ll be. It is coming. You see it in the public schools, so the more we can expose, so they aren’t behind when they see it, so it’s not foreign to them, especially if they don’t have it in the home.” Another instructor referred to her own experience in describing how she also feels like helping children grow in their technology skills will benefit them: “Growing up, my mom and dad didn’t know tech. I had to learn it all myself. Think how much better it would be to learn it at a young age.” A WGBY Digital Ambassador said, “Kids learn how to handle a tablet and manipulate a touchscreen, which they might not have at home. It’s good. Kids might hear math and shy away, but they aren’t aware they are doing math on the tablet, they see it as playing games but they are learning.”

Stations and their partners appreciated the “packaged” supplementary materials provided by producers of *The Electric Company* and *FETCH! with Ruff Ruffman* because they were engaging to children, required few adaptations, and were of high quality.

Study stations and partners who used curricular supplements associated with *The Electric Company* and *FETCH! with Ruff Ruffman* and Chicago Public Schools’ Virtual PreK “school-to-home” math activities were pleased with these resources. A KBTC educational outreach leader explained, “The partners really appreciated all the hands-on materials. The *Fetch Club* and the *FETCH! with Ruff Ruffman* materials are so high-quality, and the partners could really see the kids responding to them. And *The Electric Company* too, we loved how it can be adapted to fit the needs of various partners and kids.” A KBTC partner concurred, choosing to implement both supplements as a key component of its summer experience for children in 2012 (alternating *Fetch Club* on two days with *The Electric Company* on the other two days, with each session running about an hour). She reported that the children found the programs engaging and educational and believed that they had a positive effect on children’s behavior: “We saw a

difference in the amount of disciplinary reprimands when instituting [*The Electric Company* and *FETCH! with Ruff Ruffman* programs] because the kids like the program such much. It doesn't feel like learning to the kids because they are enjoying it so much." She also noted that the "ready-to-go" nature of the material was impressive, compared to the materials she usually uses in her program: "Normally we need to add stuff to existing curriculum or activities... We can just take [these] straight from the box and use them."

Another station had a similarly positive reaction to the Virtual PreK "Ready-for-Math" kits for school-to-home connections, which provided preschool teachers and families with ideas for math experiences at home and school. She emphasized that the kits had features (multimedia, step-by-step, easy-to-follow instructions, Spanish and English versions) that made it more likely that adults would use the kits with their children once they got home. "VPK! I love it. The layout, the chart that comes with the kit: love it too. I gave out lots of kits and did trainings." While her trainings focused mostly on parents, she felt that the materials' focus on connecting home and school was a benefit because it could provide children with more and better opportunities to learn. "I love that it has classroom, home, and online activities."

Some stations and their partners had positive responses to the math focus of the current PBS KIDS transmedia games, and some favored a continued commitment to literacy.

There was some difference of opinion among stations about whether the math focus of the current PBS KIDS transmedia resources was a good fit for them and their partners. Some thought math was a worthwhile focus because mathematics is an area where there had been fewer resources available. A KBTC station outreach leader indicated that, although math had not been a focus for her station in the past, she was pleased at the change in focus: "I wouldn't say there was a focus on math prior to [this contract]. Obviously with the PBS KIDS transmedia we've incorporated math. There wasn't a lot of material available before. Great to see it now!" Another outreach leader explained that mathematics is an area where public media had not had as many resources, so new ones would help fill a void. Some educators in Springfield indicated that having games that focus on math provided extra help for instructors who might not be comfortable or experienced supporting math learning: "We like the math focus because math is generally a challenging area for us. The tablets and the games helped the teachers be more supportive of math learning than they would have been without the games."

Other stations indicated that it was difficult to switch the content focus from literacy to math because they and their partners had been focused on literacy for so long. A WGBY leader reported, "[I would] like to see a little bit more on literacy and preliteracy development. We'd be better able to support the classroom more if we had more variety. That's what we hear from partners, they are literacy-focused." Springfield, the community in which WGBY worked during

this contract, recently won funds for a literacy-focused initiative, increasing the pressure to provide literacy resources to partners. Montana PBS found that its partners had been hoping for literacy resources: “Schools were more interested in the literacy materials and a bit dismayed that most of the games were math at first. The new mathematics focus was ‘a little bit of a surprise’ to everyone.”

Stations and their partners had thoughts on how future PBS KIDS transmedia games could be improved to support outreach needs.

Below is a list of areas that stations and their partners identified for possible attention and strengthening.

Navigation and user interface. Stations and their partners reported that navigation and user interface issues sometimes made it difficult for children to play online RTL games over the course of the year.

- Navigation within games (scrolling, tapping, clicking, dragging) was often difficult for preschool children and was sometimes more challenging when partners were using more than one type of device (IWB, laptop, tablet) because navigation modes were different from one device to the next.
- Understanding the purpose of the game was sometimes challenging without adult guidance, even when there were spoken instructions.
- Hearing and understanding spoken instructions was sometimes difficult, as was getting the game to repeat instructions. *Curious George* was cited as an example in which “clicking on the Man with the Yellow Hat” made hearing instructions again easy; it was more difficult in other suites.
- Long introductions were difficult for some children to sit through, especially if they did not understand how to skip them. One staff person explained, “The Cat [in the Hat] games, they are sometimes slow to begin. We talk to the kids about patience.”
- Hyperlinks within games made it too easy for children to leave the starting game or suite preferred by adults.

Guide to using PBS KIDS transmedia within programs. Stations and their partners were using PBS KIDS transmedia resources both in new programs and existing ones. It would be helpful, they said, to have guidance on how individual games and suites could function as a more complete set, so they can sequence or schedule a set of digital experiences and match digital experiences with nondigital ones. For example, one education outreach leader explained that she would love to see a section of the PBS KIDS Lab for teachers or for afterschool providers: “It would say, Week One,

Week Two, here's how you layer and build a kid's experience. Here's how we link experiences, or here's what we mean by hands-on experiences." Another study station found that the teachers they were working with became frustrated because it was not easy to match PBS KIDS transmedia with their existing curriculum. In response, the station began to develop a guide so that teachers would know how to organize the experience and use the PBS KIDS transmedia resources.

Level of complexity. A school principal said finding a match between the PBS KIDS games and focal skills important to teachers was a concern, but she felt it was even more worrisome that "the games don't allow kids to be imaginative and think deeply. All the ones I've seen, they're a series of set answer problems. Either kids get them right or wrong." A station outreach leader shared a complementary idea; she and her partners would like to see "less counting and more higher level math. Counting games are great, but let's add some higher-level activities. More number sense and more for kids at the upper end of the *Ready To Learn* range."

Language support. Stations and their partners indicated that having more resources in Spanish and in other languages would be a benefit to the communities and populations that *Ready To Learn* serves. One station outreach leader explained, "Parents are saying it would be really great to have a Spanish option for some of the dialogue in the games [and] Spanish versions of the games so that parents could play along and understand what's going on when their kids and grandkids play."

SUSTAINABILITY AND SCALE

National public media leaders placed a premium on having effective and innovative educational outreach efforts that can be supported over time and taken up by others. "If it's not replicable, it's not innovation. It needs to be sustainable to be successful," explained a senior program leader from PBS.

Because stations were confident of the benefits of PBS KIDS transmedia resources, they focused on sustaining and/or scaling transmedia outreach activities through new development and fundraising efforts.

All study stations reported the desire to sustain and expand their PBS KIDS transmedia outreach activities and programs. A WGBY station leader described how she felt the program and PBS KIDS resources were just beginning to achieve what they were capable of: "I'm convinced of the value [to learning of PBS KIDS materials] and look for every opportunity to share it. We would love to scale up and expand our reach. We haven't even scratched the surface in terms of the number of classrooms."

Staff members at all study stations indicated they were actively seeking new money to sustain the PBS KIDS transmedia outreach activities. They were writing grants, seeking corporate sponsorship, and exploring internal station funding for educational outreach work, but also expressed the sense that raising funds for outreach was difficult. One staff member explained, “[I] applied for three different grants already this year. One I was hopeful about didn’t get funded.”

Staff also described how grant writing is only beginning and how education department staff members are targeting funding that is not based on competitive grants. The WGBY education director explained that while she was applying for grants, she was also talking with the major giving director and corporate support director at the station about internal funding for the project. The Montana PBS outreach leader described how she plans to extend the activities started this year with contract funds into the future as part of her ongoing responsibilities. Even though there are no replacement funds at hand, her partners felt like they had not yet realized the potential of the project. She stated, “Talking about how to continue next year without stipends or more technology really saved the relationships. The partners were enthusiastic about how they would continue next year.”

In addition to stations’ efforts, partners also found ways to make the activities sustainable.

Having found PBS KIDS materials to be positive additions to their programs, partners reported that they will continue to look to public media and their station partners for valuable resources. Newer partners also reported that they look forward to maintaining collaborative relationships that began under this contract.

For an afterschool director who has made finding and incorporating PBS KIDS resources into her program a regular part of her program development routine, the project is entirely sustainable. She believed that using PBS KIDS resources strengthens the component of her program where fourth- and fifth-graders tutor kindergarteners. “[Using online games] gave the tutors a way to focus and interact with the little ones on math.” Because the school district and state provide the resources for her program, and she has the flexibility and authority to incorporate resources she sees as valuable, she considers this new way of working “very sustainable.”

A museum partner indicated that the relationships that she’s formed with colleagues at the local public media station and other partners will ensure that conversations continue: “We’re intertwined now, with a lot of the community partners and there are relationships there to build on and figure out how to capitalize on what they can do together. The *Ready To Learn* [initiative] has been a great reason to get together and do that.”

EVALUATION

Stations and their partners were concerned about the cost and difficulty of assessing how or whether their programs have a measurable impact on children.

Consistent with our research with *Raising Readers* outreach stations, demonstration stations continued to report that they understood that evaluation activities could be important for demonstrating program effectiveness and for supporting continuous improvement. At the same time, most study stations indicated they lacked the resources to support independent investigation of the possible impact of programs on learning, engagement, and/or behavioral change. A station educational outreach leader explained simply: “We’ve tried to explore options [for evaluation], but there’s just no budget for it.”

Even if there were additional resources for evaluation, not all outreach professionals were convinced that what they were doing is measurable, even though they saw it as worthwhile and important. One station outreach leader explained, “I feel like I don’t want to do an evaluation just to say we did [an evaluation]. I’m not sure if you saw changes in math ability [on an assessment] that you could say [our program] changed that...I don’t think you can say kids changed in a meaningful way during their 1-hour, one-time-a-month intervention. This intervention was focused on exposure, for parents and kids, and less about measuring change. We can talk about seeing nonmeasurable changes, enthusiasm, we see change in kids’ use of the games, ease of use, less handholding, that’s definitely improved.”

Two study stations, KBTC and Montana PBS, decided with their partners to enlist independent evaluation firms to document and report on the implementation and impact of outreach programs. For KBTC, this evaluation component was a requirement of the private foundation that is providing support to the coalition of service providers. That evaluation has been collecting baseline information on children and families, and is scheduled to document changes over the 5 years of the initiative. Montana PBS chose to work with an evaluator because community partners insisted upon it. That evaluator had completed initial data collection and will be providing a report later in 2012.

FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS

Growing out of the findings of our research on *Ready To Learn* Demonstration Station, below is a set of considerations and recommendations for members of the public media community: stations and statewide networks, CPB, PBS, and producers.

PUBLIC MEDIA STATIONS AND STATEWIDE NETWORKS

- Partner with community organizations that are prepared and well positioned to engage members of the target community.
- Consider partnering with a small number of organizations; having a large number of partners or a large service area can be appealing, but focus and depth, as opposed to breadth and reach, make for more successful and less diffuse outreach projects.
- Work toward building capacity to facilitate collaboration between partners, broker appropriate resources, and build partners' capacity to enact programs.
- Modify project goals to fit the services offered by different partners. Community partners well positioned to serve target audiences vary in the level of structure, intensity, or adult mediation in their programs.
- Prepare to get on public school calendars well in advance. School calendars for professional development and program planning are set months or years in advance.
- Consider ways to work with school accountability pressures and fixed curricular approaches that may make it difficult to work together, even when both teachers/principals and public media professionals are enthusiastic.

- Use educational outreach to benefit not just partners and audience members but also public media organizations themselves. Educational outreach can be an occasion for station departments to collaborate with one another and for public media organizations as a whole to grow and deepen their understanding of the communities they serve.
- Explore the idea that the proliferation of new PBS KIDS transmedia resources (featuring materials designed for multiple platforms and settings) can provide the opportunity for more tailored outreach that meets specific needs of partners and audience members.
- Help partners to make connections between long and abiding commitments to supporting literacy learning and newer PBS KIDS transmedia focused on mathematics, science, and other content areas. The capacity and wisdom developed through literacy work could inform work in new areas.

CORPORATION FOR PUBLIC BROADCASTING

- Reconsider the timing and duration of outreach awards. Year-long agreements have a significant influence on the sorts of collaborations that are possible at the local level, especially with formal education partners like schools and public preschool agencies like Head Start.
- It is essential for stations to identify partners prepared and positioned to engage with children and families in target communities. Consider lessening the number of required partners.
- Support stations as they move toward a model of supporting partners who are in a strong position to do frontline work with the *Ready To Learn* communities, while still continuing to serve children, families, and others directly.
- As RTL's new transmedia approach grows and matures, consider what guidance you might offer to stations and their partners on desired intensity, structure, and duration of PBS KIDS transmedia-focused programs for children and adults. Absent specific guidance, station partners will continue to offer programs aligned to their other services.

- Make clear the path you hope PBS KIDS transmedia resources will take from developers, to stations acting as intermediaries, to the direct service providers who will enact them with children. Stations identify with the idea of reaching parents, teachers, and other adults who support children's learning and development day-to-day, but need further support on how to ensure PBS KIDS transmedia resources are used in beneficial ways in homes, schools, and other settings.
- Continue the conversation about how to use PBS KIDS transmedia resources with key stakeholders in all corners of the public media community, noticing how the shift is influencing educational outreach in the system.

PBS AND PUBLIC MEDIA PRODUCERS

- Package or bundle PBS KIDS transmedia materials so as to facilitate sustained engagements. Increasingly, partners may look to content producers to provide the support and structure needed to help guide extended engagements that take advantage of resources across properties, platforms, and settings.
- Make website navigation child-friendly. Given the hypertext nature of the Web, accidentally moving away from PBS KIDS transmedia resources and their host sites can be all too easy for children and adults. Making the game experience more focused and reducing the possibilities for clicking away to another experience inside or outside PBS KIDS Lab may help sustain engagements with media.
- Offer smart solutions to support smooth, simple navigation within transmedia games on more and different technology platforms (laptops, tablets, phones, and interactive whiteboards) as they become more common in educational outreach programs. For example, it can be difficult for children to understand gameplay that sometimes involves touching the screen and other times requires a mouse.
- Develop game introductions that better support children, especially children playing on their own, in understanding the purpose of games they are playing. Current spoken and written instructions that explain the purpose of the PBS KIDS transmedia games are lengthy and tend to frustrate children.
- Offer more PBS KIDS resources, games, videos, and print materials in Spanish and other languages spoken by children, families, and community members in the *Ready To Learn* audience.

REFERENCES

Llorente, C., Pasnik, S., Penuel, W. R., & Martin, W. (2010). *Organizing for Literacy: How public media stations are raising readers in their communities. A case study report to the CPB-PBS Ready to Learn initiative*. New York and Menlo Park, CA: Education Development Center, Inc., and SRI International.

Merriam, S.B. (1998). *Qualitative Research and Case Study Applications in Education*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Noblit, G. W. & Hare R.D. (1988) *Meta-ethnography: Synthesizing qualitative studies*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.

Patton, M. Q. (2001). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods (3rd ed.)*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.

Penuel, W. R. (2010). A dialogical epistemology for educational evaluation. In W. R. Penuel & K. O'Connor (Eds). Learning research as a human science. *National Society for the Study of Education Yearbook*, 109(1), 128-143.

Yin, R. K. (2009). *Case study research, design and methods, 4th ed*. Newbury Park: Sage Publications.

About EDC/CCT

Education Development Center, Inc. is a global nonprofit organization that develops, delivers, and evaluates innovative programs to address urgent challenges in education, health, and economic development. EDC manages more than 300 projects in 35 countries. For more than 25 years, EDC's Center for Children and Technology has been at the forefront of creating and researching new ways to foster learning and improve teaching through the development and thoughtful implementation of new educational technologies.

About SRI/CTL

SRI International is an independent, nonprofit research institute conducting client-sponsored research and development for government agencies, commercial businesses, foundations, and other organizations. SRI's 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.

Principal Investigators

Shelley Pasnik

sp@edc.org

Carlin Llorente

carlin.llorente@sri.com

Support Provided By



The contents of this document were developed under a cooperative agreement from the U.S. Department of Education (Award Number U295A1005). However, these contents do not necessarily represent the policy of the U.S. Department of Education and you should not assume endorsement by the Federal Government.