



Unit 7 – Using Technology and Interactive Media with Preschool-Age Children

Key Topic 2: A Closer Look at Children and Electronic Media



Focus Statement

Students deepen their understanding of the impacts, values, and questions around digital technology and young children by developing some form of presentation to share with families about the way technology and interactive media are used in a preschool classroom.

Curriculum Alignment Project (CAP) Student Learning Outcomes

The Curriculum Alignment Project's (CAP) lower division eight courses, CAP expansion courses, and student learning outcomes are mapped onto each instructional guide learning experience. See Appendix A for the specific student learning outcomes, objectives, and examples of course content and topics for the courses listed below.

- Child, Family and Community
- Introduction to Curriculum
- Practicum-Field Experience
- Administration II: Personnel and Leadership in Early Childhood Education
- Curriculum and Strategies for Children with Special Needs

Instructional Methodologies

- Brainstorming
- Class discussion
- Class presentation
- Creation of a visual representation
- Development of a resource tool
- Interview



- Lecture
- Literature review
- Pairs or small groups
- Peer review and feedback
- Reflective discussion
- Short paper or report

California Early Childhood Educator Competency Areas to Consider

These competency areas are from the California Department of Education, Early Education and Support Division's *California Early Childhood Educator Competencies* (CDE 2011). The "Competency Areas to Consider" below are listed in this instructional guide as a preliminary exploration of how particular competency areas might be addressed through these learning experiences.

- Family and Community Engagement
- Relationships, Interactions, and Guidance
- Learning Environments and Curriculum
- Special Needs and Inclusion
- Leadership in Early Childhood Education
- Professionalism
- Administration and Supervision



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Before You Start

This key topic is designed to increase students' understanding of the impacts, values, and questions that need to be considered around using technology and electronic media with young children in preschool programs. In this learning experience, students are asked to develop some kind of presentation for parents/caregivers about how digital technology and electronic media are being used in the classroom and considerations for using technology at home. It is intended that students will think about what they would include in their own classrooms, thus making some decisions about their own beliefs, values, and practices related to technology and preschool children. It is also important for students to be prepared to share with families some of the similarities and differences between using technology at school and in the home.

The active learning begins with a discussion of the demographics of the children and families in the students' communities. The section on "Children and Electronic Media" (*California Preschool Program Guidelines*, p. 93) provides some examples of data that students can consider. It may be helpful for faculty to identify some sources of local demographic data that students can reference. The U.S. Department of Commerce and the U.S. Census Bureau have some data regarding computer and Internet access by state and different individual characteristics. Although these are likely too broad to apply to specific communities in California, these may provide some general information to begin a discussion of families' access to digital technology.

Students are to read or review several pages of Chapter 7 and then work in small groups to develop their presentations. Faculty may choose to have students do all segments of the active learning in class or assign the reading and/or small group work to be done out of class. If all the work is done in class, faculty may also want to provide some materials that students can use in developing visual supports for their presentations (e.g., poster paper, markers, scissors, tape). By having students work on their presentations outside of class, students may also be able to produce copies of newsletter articles, fact or information sheets, or electronic slide presentations. Faculty may also want to consider planning this learning experience over at least two class sessions so that students can have time to do their small group work and then deliver their presentations during another class.

It is important for students to be familiar with some of the technology terms used in this chapter. Both the "Getting Ready for the Unit" and Key Topic 1 of this unit provide



opportunities for students to explore these terms. Or faculty may also explain the terms through a brief lecture or discussion.

This key topic is based on content in the first three sections of Chapter 7: “Children and Electronic Media,” “Technology and Interactive Media in the Preschool Environment,” and “The Benefits and the Challenges of Using Technology and Interactive Media.” One primary source for the content is the joint position statement adopted in January 2012 by the National Association for the Education of Young Children and the Fred Rogers Center for Early Learning and Children’s Media at Saint Vincent College—*Technology and Interactive Media as Tools in Early Childhood Programs Serving Children from Birth through Age 8*. The following explanation is found on page 1 of this joint position statement: “This statement is intended primarily to provide guidance to those working in early childhood education programs serving children from birth through age 8. Although not developed as a guide for families in the selection and use of technology and interactive media in their homes, the information here may be helpful to inform such decisions.” However, faculty may choose to also have students review the position statement as additional background for their presentations. Reviewing this statement is also suggested in a “Deeper Understanding” segment of Key Topic 1 of this unit. The statement can be downloaded from the Fred Rogers Center at <http://www.fredrogerscenter.org/initiatives/digital-media-learning/resources/> (accessed January 20, 2016).

Faculty may also suggest that students review some of the resources for families suggested in the “Deeper Understanding” segment. Students could then decide how they might include these resources in their presentations. It is also important for faculty to remind students that the research is still limited around certain topics. Therefore, whatever information students share with families should reflect the most current research and evidence and be done in a nonjudgmental way. Students can also let families know that the research in some areas is still emerging.

If students do not have copies of the *California Preschool Program Guidelines*, the Portable Document Format (PDF) version can be downloaded from the California Department of Education Web site at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/cd/re/documents/preschoolproggdlns2015.pdf> (accessed January 20, 2016).

This learning experience also provides an option for students to interview parents or other caregivers of preschool-age children. If faculty choose this option, the number of class sessions for this key topic may need to be extended.

Information Delivery

As described in the “Before You Start” section, the primary information for this key topic is from these sections of Chapter 7:



Slide 2

- Children and Electronic Media (pp. 93–94)
- Technology and Interactive Media in the Preschool Environment (pp. 94–95)
- The Benefits and the Challenges of Using Technology and Interactive Media (pp. 95–97)

If students have already read the chapter or these sections, faculty may choose to deliver a brief lecture reviewing the key points rather than have students read the sections. It is also important that students are familiar with the following terms and definitions used in Chapter 7 and defined in the glossary (pp. 249–250):



Slides 3-5

- “electronic media. Media that rely on technology to broadcast or store information. Examples include television, radio, DVDs, computers, the Internet, telephones, gaming consoles, and handheld devices.”
- “screen technologies. Electronic devices with which users view content through a screen. This category may include televisions, computers, smartphones, and tablets.”
- “interactive media. Forms of electronic media with content designed to facilitate active and creative use by young children and to encourage social engagement with other children and adults (NAEYC and FRC 2012). Forms of interactive media include software programs, applications, broadcast media, the Internet, e-books, and some children’s television programming.”

Active Learning

Getting it started

Begin this learning experience by reviewing the research and prevalence data in Chapter 7 around children’s accessibility to and use of different types of electronic media. Remind the students that some of this information refers to infants and toddlers, and this learning experience focuses on preschool-age children.



Slide 6

If students are currently working in or have worked in preschool programs, ask them to reflect on what they know about the children and families enrolled in their classes. For students who have not worked in an early education setting, ask them to think about their communities—rural or urban, range of income levels, educational background of families, accessibility to technology, availability of community resources that have computers for public use, and so forth. Then discuss how the information from Chapter 7 compares



with the students' understandings of the digital technology accessibility and usage by children and families in their programs and/or communities.

Keeping it going

Explain to students that they will be developing some kind of presentation that they could share with parents to explain why and how electronic media is being used in their children's classroom and things parents can consider in using electronic media at home. Ask students to brainstorm a list of questions that parents may have about this topic. It is sometimes helpful to have students first individually develop a list of about 10 questions and then share their lists to develop an overall class list. Make the final list available for students to access as they develop their presentations

Online Options

Students could post their 10 questions online for review by their classmates and the instructor. The class could then agree on the final 10 during a class session. Or if there is online discussion capability, the instructor could facilitate a process to agree on the 10 questions online.



Slide 7

Taking it further

As additional preparation, ask students to read or review pages 93–97 of the *California Preschool Program Guidelines*. Faculty may also decide to have students read the joint position statement by the National Association for the Education of Young Children and the Fred Rogers Center for Early Learning and Children's Media at St. Vincent College. Then divide the class into small groups of approximately three to four students per group. Instruct the students to keep in mind the discussions about the children and families in their programs or communities and the list of possible questions from parents as they develop their presentations.

And although the chapter focuses primarily on using technology and interactive media in the preschool classroom and not in the home, some of the research findings, benefits, and challenges could apply across settings. Suggest that students consider how some of the recommended classroom practices could also be helpful for parents to follow at home. For example, students could think about how the following statement from pages 93–94 of *California Preschool Program Guidelines* guides what both teachers and parents can do: "By age three, children can benefit from well-designed, age-appropriate electronic media, especially when a caring adult views



Slide 8



the program with the child and is actively involved in the child's experience" (Bittman et al. 2011).



Slide 9

Students can choose any format for their presentations: newsletter article, oral presentation, information/letter sent home, fact sheet or poster on a family bulletin board, and so forth. Encourage students to make the presentation visually interesting as well as incorporate key messages that they want to share with parents.

Putting it together

Provide time during a class session for each group to do its presentation. It is suggested that these be about 15 minutes in length with time for classmates to ask questions and provide some feedback about each presentation.

Another approach

Instead of students brainstorming lists of questions parents might have about the use of electronic media in the classroom, students are to interview parents to find out what questions they have. The class could develop a common set of interview questions or students could individually develop their own questions for their interviews. Depending on students' access to parents, faculty could ask students to work individually or in groups of two or three.



Slides 10-12

Online Options

Students could post their family interview questions online, keeping the family member anonymous unless specific permission has been given. The instructor could then facilitate an online discussion about possible responses and resources to the questions, possibly using a different thread for similar questions.

Students could then work in small groups to develop presentations and then present them as described in the "Taking it further" and "Putting it together" segments. Or students could research and develop responses to the parents' questions. These could be shared in a class discussion or submitted as assignments.

Reflection



Slide 13

After all the groups have done their presentations, conclude the learning experience with a reflective class discussion. The following questions are suggested to guide the discussion:

- What images or phrases are still resonating with you from the presentations?



Slide 14

- What appealed to you? What felt more difficult to understand?
- What did you learn from developing your group's presentation? What did you learn from your classmates' presentations?
- What will you take from these presentations if you were asked to discuss with parents the use of technology and electronic media in your classroom?

This second set of more general reflective questions can be used in this and other key topics for additional class discussion or to guide individual student journaling.



Slides 15-17

- Which ideas or part of this class session stood out most for you?
- What seemed familiar or reinforced what you already know or have experienced? What gave you a new perspective or insight that causes you to think differently about teaching preschool children and/or engaging their families?
- Why do you think the content of this class session was presented the way it was? How did this approach help you understand the content? What else would have helped? What does this tell you about how you learn?
- How will you decide what to apply from this class session in your work with preschool children and families? What will you do to ensure you will implement what you have decided to use?

Deeper Understanding



Slides 18-19

Two options are presented for students to more deeply explore information that they can share with families. The first approach is to ask students to identify a research question from the list of parent questions that they would like to know more about. Students are to identify at least three articles on the question through a brief literature review and write a two- to three-page paper that provides a response to the question. The paper should include the following elements:

- Clear statement of the question
- Summary of each article including key points and how the article addresses the question
- Student's response to the question based on the research



- Student's reflection on the question and research articles



Slides 20-23

The second option is to research and identify a resource that can be shared with parents. The following Web sites listed on page 104 of the *California Preschool Program Guidelines* all have information specifically for families:

- Center on Media and Child Health
<http://cmch.tv/parents/> (accessed January 20, 2016)
- Children's Technology Review
<http://childrenstech.com/> (accessed January 20, 2016)
- Fred Rogers Center for Early Learning and Children's Media
<http://www.fredrogerscenter.org/category/family/> (accessed January 20, 2016)
- TEC Center at Erikson Institute: Technology in Early Childhood
<http://teccenter.erikson.edu/category/families/> (accessed January 20, 2016)

Faculty may also suggest additional Web sites and encourage students to review others. Students are then to choose a Web site and identify specific resources that they would share with families of preschool children. The list of resources should include a description or sample of each resource and a brief explanation of why this resource was selected and how the student would use the resource. If the students' papers are compiled, students would then have a resource tool to use in their practice.