



## Early Learning and Technology Showcase: How Research Influences the Use of Digital Media in Early Learning

**Date:** September 21, 2023

**Time:** 9:00-10:15 a.m.

**Location:** Macaroni Classroom, The REACH, John F Kennedy Center, 2700 F St NW, Washington DC 20566

**Hosted by:** Office of Elementary and Secondary Education (OESE), U.S. Department of Education

**Contact for Questions:** Brian Lekander, U.S. Department of Education, [Brian.Lekander@ed.gov](mailto:Brian.Lekander@ed.gov)

**RSVP to Attend:** [CLICK HERE](#). *Please note – the room where this event is being held has limited capacity. When the size limit is reached, registration will close. Attendees [can also register here](#) for the IES Innovation Day and the ED Games Office Hours to attend these events after the Early Learning Showcase concludes.*

**Note:** This showcase is intended to bring together digital media developers, researchers, and educators who work in early learning (Pre-K through 3<sup>rd</sup> grade) and are attending the [ED Games Expo](#).

**Overview:** This interactive session addresses the ways research influences the use of digital media in early learning, including improvements in design, accessibility, learning, and engagement. In a conversation moderated by staff from the U.S. Department of Education, researchers and educational media developers from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, PBS KIDS, Education Development Center, the Joan Ganz Cooney Center, and Cognitive Toybox will use share examples of how research is informing how games and digital playful experiences for kids are designed and used. Together with the audience, they will explore questions such as: *How do we know whether digital media does what we intend? What results can we identify from their use? Why do these results matter, and what are the implications for using digital media moving forward?*

**Moderators:**

- Jamila Smith, Director, Innovation and Early Learning Programs, U.S. Department of Education
- Brian Lekander, Program Manager, Ready to Learn Programming, U.S. Department of Education

**Panelists:**

- Kea Anderson, Director of Research and Evaluation, Corporation for Public Broadcasting
- Tammy Kwan, Co-founder and CEO, Cognitive ToyBox
- Allisyn Levy, Senior Manager, Partners and Planning, Joan Ganz Cooney Center
- Shelley Pasnik, Senior Vice President, Education Development Center
- Jeremy Roberts, Senior Director of Learning Technologies, PBS KIDS
- Jen Rodriguez, Director of Research & Inclusive Design, PBS KIDS
- Medha Tare, Senior Director of Research, Joan Ganz Cooney Center

**Presenter Bios:**

- Kea Anderson, Director of Research and Evaluation, Corporation for Public Broadcasting. Anderson directs Ready To Learn Research for the CPB-PBS Ready To Learn Initiative and contributes to other public media research focused on learning, innovation, equity, and access for children and youth. Prior to joining CPB, Anderson's led studies and evaluations at SRI international centered on improving quality, equity, and access in informal learning from early childhood to postsecondary, particularly in STEM fields.
- Dr. Tammy Kwan is the CEO of Cognitive ToyBox, a company she co-founded in 2015. Tammy is the driving force behind her organization's partnerships with leading researchers, receiving support from funders including the National Science Foundation, the Institute of Education Sciences, and the Gates Foundation. The company's flagship product is an integrated observational and game-based assessment platform that makes assessment more efficient, accurate, and actionable for early childhood educators. Tammy holds an EdD and MBA from New York University and a BA in Psychology from Stanford University.
- Brian Lekander is the Program Manager of the Ready to Learn Television Program and a Program Officer for the Education Innovation and Research Program (EIR) in the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Elementary and Secondary Education. In the past, Brian has served as the program manager of the Department's Learning Anytime Anywhere Partnerships (LAAP), the Star Schools Program, and the Comprehensive Program of the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE). In addition to his career in the federal government, Brian has worked at North Park University and at the district offices of the City Colleges of Chicago.
- Allisyn Levy is Senior Manager, Partners and Planning, at the Joan Ganz Cooney Center. Prior to joining the Joan Ganz Cooney Center, she worked as a Product Strategist for the Lifelong Kindergarten Group at MIT Media Lab, and played an integral role in the

creation, launch, and continued development of multiple features at the educational website, BrainPOP.

- Jeremy Roberts is Senior Director of Learning Tech for PBS KIDS, where he focuses on insights and innovation towards demonstrating impact at scale from PBS KIDS educational media. One of Roberts' core initiatives is the PBS KIDS Learning Analytics research program which uses game play data and AB testing to systematically discover the design principles that best balance reach, engagement and learning considerations. By feeding insights directly into the production of PBS KIDS media, Jeremy's efforts strive to produce the best overall impact.
- Jen Rodriguez leads formative research activities for PBS KIDS, aiming to enhance engagement, ease of use and efficacy of literacy, math, STEM, and computational thinking animated stories, podcasts, digital games, websites, and apps for learners ages 2-8 and their families. Over the past 15+ years working in public media, Jen has collaborated with creative teams in delivering impactful, award-winning digital and unplugged content for kids and families. An equity-loving innovator, Jen has led teams in developing and researching these “firsts” for the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS): accessibility features (i.e. ASL translations, audio controls, captions), conversational and gestural user experiences, Spanish language content, augmented reality apps, and adaptive games.
- Shelley Pasnik is the senior vice president of external affairs at Education Development Center. An internationally recognized expert in the thoughtful integration of digital media, she has guided the development of children’s educational services, conducted policy-influencing research, and cultivated high-profile public-private partnerships both in the U.S. and globally. She leads the external research team for the CPB-PBS KIDS Ready To Learn initiative and loves when research studies are useful to others!
- Jamila Smith serves as the Director of the Office of Innovation and Early Learning Programs at the U.S. Department of Education. She oversees several initiatives that provides financial and technical support to improve the educational achievement of students, particularly high-need students and our youngest learners. Jamila has led initiatives to support students and communities in rural and geographically isolated areas and has also served as a technical assistance lead, leading initiatives focused on performance management and education reform sustainability. Prior to joining the Department, Jamila’s commitment to education reform was solidified early in her career in her work as a social work advocate for homeless children, where she advocated for coordinated and timely assessment services for elementary school aged children.
- Medha Tare, PhD, is the Senior Director of Research at the Joan Ganz Cooney Center at Sesame Workshop. She is an experienced researcher in the learning sciences and technology area. She examines how children and adults learn from different media and how to support better design to meet the needs of all users.