



Family
Online Safety
Institute

ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2014

Panel Summary: Tech for Tots: How Young is Too Young?

Moderator: Dan Tynan, Yahoo!

Panelists: Dresden Shumaker, CreatingMotherhood.com; Aaron Morris, PBPS Kids Digital; Rhian Evans Allvin, National Association for the Education of Young Children; Nate Glissmeyer, Amazon

With companies increasingly targeting children and infants with technology, the American Academy of Pediatrics stating that children under two years-old should have no screen time, and electronics becoming more infused with and unavoidable in daily life, this panel looked at the issues arising from this shifting paradigm.

Nate Glissmeyer from Amazon discussed positive opportunities of a child's use of technology. As parents can set limits on device use without exception, can receive feedback about a child's learning through apps, and have a huge amount of information from producers and fellow users about apps and tech, parents are in a very powerful position to use technology in constructive manners with and for their children.

Dresden Shumaker from CreatingMotherhood.com, whose son is a student at a "digital school," also highlighted the new and positive opportunities technology for young children brings. For example, she pointed out how the question of too much screen time could be misguided for someone like her son who is able to read more and easier than ever through an e-reader. Questions on intention and usage are more important than simple "tech or no tech" approach.

Aaron Morris from PBPS Kids Digital agreed with this point on usage. Technology can sustain a constructive conversation, but knowing where which resources and forms of digital media should be used is the trick. Technology use also can provide other positive skills such as teamwork, patience, and creativity, which can be applied to outside the digital world.

Lastly, Rhian Evans Allvin from the National Association for the Education of Young Children began by underlining that all technology is not equal. Using the available resources in ways that enable and empower children by giving them tools to better their problem solving and pattern recognition skills is a very important use of these new technologies. Socialization and interpersonal skills that can be learned through tech that will prepare children for school should not be avoided for the sake of "screen time." All the panelists agreed on the points that excess of tech is a real concern as well as that tech use should be geared and focused to bring out the benefits to the users, especially if the user is a child.