Engaging and Empowering Families of Young Children in the Digital Age

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Get to know me!

Luisa Cotto

• B.Ed. in Elementary Education
• M.Ed. Curriculum and Instruction, Instructional Technology
• Worked as a coach and family liaison in two early literacy grants
• Currently work as a manager of engagement and communications at United Way of Miami-Dade
• Love to blog about early childhood and technology and use social media

@luisacotto
Webinar Resources

To access the webinar resources visit:

http://tinyurl.com/familytechtools

Engaging Families in the Digital Age

https://www.pinterest.com/luisacotto/
Poll: Who is listening?

Administrator
Teacher
Curriculum Specialist
Trainer/Coach
Other
Webinar goals
Understanding today’s families
What is family?

Where children ages 0 – 5 years live

- Both parents: 72%
- Single Parent: 25%
- Other: 3%

U.S. Census Bureau, 2014
Family: “The people living in the children’s homes who love and care for them.” (Rieger, 2008)
The importance of engaging everyone

Bronfenbrenner’s ecological system theory

Figure 1. Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems theory
(in Berk & Roberts, 2009, p. 28)
Building relationship with families
Families have a major influence on their children’s achievement in school and through life. . . When schools build partnerships with families that respond to their concerns and honor their contributions, they are successful in sustaining connections that are aimed at improving student achievement.

(Henderson & Mapp, 2002, p. 7)
Poll

What are some of the barriers you face when communicating with families?
Create a family-friendly environment

Ask yourself these questions:

• Are there any barriers between school and family (e.g. language)?

• Do I have a way to know families preferred mode of communication (in person, email, phone, etc.)?

• Are the scheduled family meetings considering families’ input?

• Do families have transportation?

• Can children attend meetings or do I provide childcare at the school during meetings?
Fred Rogers

“It is through relationships that we grow best and learn best.”
Engaging families using a variety of digital tools.
Lessons from marketing
Lessons from marketing

**Marketing** is the way companies interact with consumers to create relationships that are beneficial to both parties.

Family Engagement is the way early childhood programs interact with families to create relationships that are beneficial to both parties.
Get to know your target audience: families

Lessons from marketing

• All about my child form
• Meetings
• Preferred mode of communication
• Home visit
• Surveys
• Be open to listen
Communication Channels

- **Written/Print**
  - Portfolios
  - Forms

- **Online**
  - School Website
  - Family portal
  - Social Media
  - Video
  - Email

- **Face-to-face**
  - Meetings
  - Daily interactions

- **Mobile**
  - Apps
  - Text
  - Calls
Poll

What digital communication channel you use most frequently when communicating with families?
Emails
204 billion is the number of email sent/received per day.
Email use

Email communication continues to be the most familiar communication channel and people’s top online activity.
Email use

Lessons from marketing

• Content must be relevant
• Subject line should be consistent
• Make it visual
• Add a call to action
Hello families,

This week, after reading *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* by Eric Carle, children got really interested about caterpillars and butterflies. We decided to watch a video on YouTube to learn more and we are planning a visit to the Butterfly garden.

Here is the link to the video: https://youtu.be/AZk6nZGH9Xo

Do you know how to create a butterfly garden? We would like to create one at our Center. Here is the link I found on how to do that: http://www.wikihow.com/Create-a-Butterfly-Garden. We would appreciate your help.
Mobile Devices
64% of Americans now own a smartphone.
63% of them use their cellphones to go online.
Messages from families

• Teachers can encourage family members to leave messages for their children. This will help smooth the transition from home to school.

• Nowadays, phones have the capability of recording audio that can be sent by email.

Eva and his dad, Dan (Tampa, FL)
Families record stories in other languages

Los tres deseos

Adrian and his mom, Jaqueline
Quick Response Codes

• Create QR codes easily at http://www.qrstuff.com/

• Download QR Code reader in app store

• Link to existing content or create new content.

ReadingPals
Home activity
Dear families,
In this packet, you will find the book, Otis written by Loren Long and an activity you can do at home with your child.

Book summary
Otis is a lovable tractor. He loves his farm and farmer. He particularly loves the little calf in the next stall, whom he pursues a little with his soft motor. They become great friends, romping in the fields, leaping bales of hay and playing ring-around-the-neck near the Mud Pond.

But when the big yellow tractor comes to the farm and replaces Otis, he is cast away to rust behind the barn—until the little calf gets stuck in the Mud Pond. Then, there is only one tractor (and it’s not big or yellow) who saves the day. It’s little Otis!

Activity: Friendship drawing
Objectives: Develop vocabulary as they talk about their friendship drawings, as well as develop knowledge and understanding of meaning and use of print as they create artwork to depict friendship.

Materials: The book, Otis, blank paper, drawing materials such as markers and crayons

Introduction: Show your child the picture of Otis and the calf together at the end of the book. Remind your child that Otis and the calf are very good friends and they like to do many different things and spend time together.

Help your child do a drawing
1. Help your child find a place of paper and drawing materials. Ask her/him to think about a special friend, like Otis is to the calf. Engage your child in a conversation about his/her own friends and ask him/her to draw a picture of things he/she likes to do with his/her friends.

2. Encourage your child to talk about his/her work. Write on your child’s artwork the things that he/she says as captions (for example: “I like to play hide-and-seek with my special friend”).

Activity adapted from Jumpstart.com
Scan this QR Code to watch a video of the book.
Engaging Families
Seesaw: The Learning Journal

See saw is a student-driven digital portfolio that allows children to create, capture and share their learning.

You can share the portfolio with each family and they can add comments.
Engaging Families

Remind

Safely send text messages to families without seeing their phone numbers or sharing yours.

One-way messaging only. This allow you to send updates and reminders.
Integrating Multiple Forms of Documentation

Shadow Puppet

You can choose images, record voice over and share it.

You can share via email, text message, Facebook and Twitter
Integrating Multiple Forms of Documentation

Flipgram

This app allows you to create videos using pictures on your phone. Then you can share with families.
Multi-touch mobile devices

Common Sense Media

Learning Tools: Preschool Prep

Starting school can be difficult -- both kids and parents can be unsure of what to expect. Sure, it's great if your kids can identify their shapes and colors. But getting by in preschool involves so much more. These terrific apps, games, and websites can help kids build friendships and learn everyday life skills, too -- such as observing the weather, understanding the importance of moving around, and expressing their feelings.

More for you and your family

Other great lists from our editors
- Learning Tools: Teamwork and Making Friends
- Learning Tools: Move It!

Advice on the big issues
- What's Really Best for Learning?

About our rating system
- ON: Content is age-appropriate for kids this age.
- PAUSE: Know your child; some content may not be right for some kids.
- OFF: Not age-appropriate for kids this age.
Social Media

*noun*
websites and applications that enable users to create and share content or to participate in social networking.
Most popular social media networks

Facebook

- Users share 1 million links every 20 minutes
- Largest opportunities
- Social sharing site that has 1+ billion users worldwide
- Communicating with consumers in a non-obtrusive way
- 1+ billion active users

Statistics as of 4.25.2014 Designed by: Leverage - leveragenewagmedia.com
Facebook: Pages

- Can act as a central channel of communication in which schools can share the latest news, resources, pictures of school events, and more.

- Each classroom in the school can have a group in which they can share pictures with families privately, have conversations, and create polls.

- Video chat with expert and families.

- Use it to collaborate with other early childhood practitioners.
Facebook: Pages

- Can be public or closed
- You can use them to collaborate or share information
- Share files
- Comment
- Reconnect
- Share resources
Most popular social media networks

Twitter

Largest penetration in the US

But spreading slowly and steadily

241 million active users

Micro blogging social site that limits each post to 140 characters

5,700 tweets happen every second

Statistics as of 4.25.2014 Designed by: Leverage - leveragenewagemedia.com
Twitter Language

@username – A tweet to a specific person

RT @username – Is a retweet, when you share someone else’s tweet

# = is a hashtag. Hashtags are used to organize posts or create chat rooms within twitter.
Some hashtags to follow

#TechEarlyYears
#earlychildhood
#ecetech
#prek
#preschool
#childcare
#ELL

#earlyed
#naeyc
#naeyccac
#headstart
#ecechat
#dllchat
Pinterest
Most popular social media networks

Pinterest

Social site that is all about discovery

Largest opportunities

Users are:
- 17% Male
- 83% Female

20 million active users

Statistics as of 4.25.2014 Designed by: Leverage - leveragenewagemedia.com
Water Exploration

The children discussed ways they could help to conserve water at the school. Using a movie they created about water, the children talked about raising money at the movie premier for a rain barrel that could catch water. The children also created a poster describing the use and importance a rain barrel would have in our garden.

A visiting expert, Barbara, donated a rain barrel to the class. In conversations with the children, they decided to paint the barrel to showcase the importance of water conservation. The children created their designs and worked together to paint the barrel.

After our visit to the Laundromat, the children decided to create their own version in the classroom. The children used water and soap to hand-wash clothes, and they used clothespins to hang clothes to dry on a clothesline. The children described how to wash the clothes using vocabulary such as ‘detergent’, ‘liquid’, ‘clothesline’, ‘wash bin’, and ‘clothespin’.

The children visited a Laundromat and made many observations about washing machines, dryers, clothes, water and temperature. The children noticed different kinds of detergents people use and that the dryers were bigger than the washing machines. They loved seeing the clothes spinning around in circles and observed how the water helps move the clothes and soap around in the washer.

Mr. Thompson from the Water Treatment Plant of Miami-Dade spoke to the children about how to conserve water, why it's important, where water comes, and how water treatment plants help clean the water we drink.

Pinned from unitedwaycfe.org
Pinterest

Profile Picture 165 x 165 px

This bar allows you to see your pins in different formats: boards, pins and likes.

You can create as many boards as you want. This helps you organize your pins by topic.

When you like something and you want to “Pin it”, click the button and then select the board in which you want to place it. You can always create new boards by typing a new name and click create.

Also, you can use the + sign to upload a Pin from your computer or the web. You can also access create a board here.

Brought to you by United Way Center for Excellence in Early Education—unitedwayce.org
Virtual Field Trip
YouTube

Create playlist on your YouTube channel with your “approved” videos. Not all content on YouTube is good.
Beyond the Classroom Walls
Skype

education.skype.com

luisa.cotto
Beyond the Classroom Walls
Google Hangout
Recap

Go from micro to macro: A child’s learning is influenced by all the people in his life and the experiences he is presented with.

Encourage collaboration: Make sure that children’s learning does not stop in the classroom.

Stay connected: To have an effective two-way communication use multiple communication channels.

Keep informed: Use social media to share ideas, learn from others.
Q&A
Connect with us!

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youtube.com/user/UnitedWayMiami

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