Since 1996, West Virginia Public Broadcasting’s Ready To Learn service has helped parents and caregivers of preschool children -- birth to eight years old -- use television as a tool in teaching basic skills that prepare them for formal schooling.

Given the demands of a competitive global economy, the trusted educational content that PBS KIDS delivers on-air and online to 98% of America’s children is more relevant than ever. President Obama has called upon Americans to “out-educate” the rest of the world, and has set a goal for the U.S. to retake the lead in college graduation rates by the year 2020. To achieve this vision, we must ensure that our earliest learners have a stronger foundation in mathematics, and are reading at grade level by the third grade.

Working together, PBS and the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB) -- along with children's media producers, educational advisors and technology experts -- are developing suites of interactive educational media across multiple technology platforms that will improve the math and literacy skills of children ages 2-8, especially those living in poverty. The work is made possible by a U.S. Department of Education Ready To Learn grant.

The premise of the PBS-CPB Ready To Learn project is that today’s children gain a deeper understanding of core skills when engaged in learning via multiple technology platforms. The project will leverage a range of digital media tools to help children learn, including video content, immersive worlds, mobile apps, touch tablets, 3D and augmented reality games and whiteboard applications.

Content is drawn from PBS KIDS’ award-winning, curriculum-based properties, such as Super WHY, The Cat in the Hat Knows A Lot About That!, Curious George, Dinosaur Train, Sid the Science Kid, Peg + Cat, Fizzy’s Lunch Lab, and The Electric Company.

There are three main phases of the initiative:

1. the development of engaging math and literacy content that is aligned to curriculum frameworks and resources for parents and teachers;
2. rigorous research to assess the efficacy of the content and platforms; and
3. broad distribution and use of the content across multiple platforms in communities, schools and homes across the country.

The first phase includes several cross-platform suites of interactive math and literacy games, mobile and interactive whiteboard apps, television content, and videos that are being developed and tested in collaboration with curriculum and technology experts. Skills addressed include counting, data analysis and geometry, as well as letter identification and letter sounds.
Free resources and best practice guides are being created to support parents’ and teachers’ efforts to integrate the content into both informal and formal learning environments. A progress tracker is also being developed that will allow parents and teachers to map and track children's progress and skill development across technology platforms. These materials will be distributed online, through community-based partner organizations and through local PBS stations, including West Virginia PBS.

Measuring children's learning outcomes is a major priority of the PBS-CPB Ready To Learn Initiative. To that end, extensive formative and summative research and evaluation will be conducted by the Education Development Center (EDC), SRI International, and WestEd.

PBS stations and community partners such as Title 1 schools, out-of-school programs, child care providers, public libraries and museums will introduce children, families and educators to the innovative educational resources being developed as part of this project. Partners include Chicago Public Schools and Virtual Pre-K, Boston University's School of Education, the National Summer Learning Association and the Collaborative for Building After-School Systems.

The Ready To Learn Initiative is an effective children’s media service for America's most at-risk children, and is available to all families across the U.S. The program is an innovative partnership between Congress, the U.S. Department of Education, the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, PBS, local PBS stations and their community-based partners. The Ready To Learn Initiative leverages the reach of public media to provide educational resources for kids across platforms.

Ready To Learn in West Virginia

West Virginia Public Broadcasting’s Ready To Learn service coordinates with this national effort and provides a variety of community-oriented initiatives to prepare our state’s children for lifelong educational success. These include: workshops, events, library corners, reading camps and special curriculum programs.

In 2013, West Virginia Public Broadcasting worked in 20 counties, sponsoring 145 literacy-related events or workshops that benefited 25,474 children. Since 2000, the Ready To Learn service has worked in all 55 counties, sponsoring 1,270 events and workshops that benefited 288,912 children and their families.

To learn more about Ready To Learn in West Virginia, contact our Ready To Learn staff.

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