Choosing Media Content for Young Children Using the E-AIMS Model

Looking for media content to make learning fun, yet challenging, for your young one? Use the E-AIMS model to set your sights on programming that is: Engaging, Actively Involved, Meaningful, and Social.

When choosing content, ask these questions:

Is my child Engaged? Is there a learning goal or story as part of the screen experience?
- If YES, choose content that has a clear story line or learning goal, like a good e-book or an app that prompts the child to complete a puzzle.
- If NO, look for another experience that seeks responses from your child.

Is there lots of extra interactivity that doesn’t relate to learning?
- If YES, look for an experience that focuses on learning—while having fun. Avoid distractions like buttons that take the child outside the story or apps with pop-up ads.
- If NO, look for another experience that seeks responses from your child.

Is my child Actively Involved? Does she look like she’s really thinking about, and participating in, the content?
- If YES, look for another experience that seeks responses from your child.
- If NO, look for experiences that your child can relate to, such as mealtime and playtime. Content with lots of imaginary elements—like a story about aliens doing unfamiliar activities in space—which is hard for a child to understand and learn from.

Is the program, app, or game so familiar that my child is on “autopilot”?
- If YES, find a new experience that is more challenging.
- If NO, look for experiences that your child can relate to, such as mealtime and playtime. Content with lots of imaginary elements—like a story about aliens doing unfamiliar activities in space—which is hard for a child to understand and learn from.

Is the content Social? Does this experience encourage my child to talk or respond within the game?
- If YES, consider choosing a more interactive screen experience.
- If NO, look for a more socially interactive experience.

Does this experience encourage my child to interact with me as we play together?
- If YES, look for a more socially interactive experience.
- If NO, look for a more socially interactive experience.

Congratulations—you have chosen a high-quality, fun, and challenging screen experience for your child!

Hirsh-Pasek et al., 2015

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