

Technology Redefined, or Maybe Just Clarified

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A little bit of a backstory: once upon a time (2010-2012) The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) was preparing a new version of their position statement regarding Tech Use in Early Childhood. Needless to say the initial draft got a lot of people fired up and many of us provided strongly worded comments and feedback. As the whole thing erupted I noticed that most of the debates were centered around the pros and cons of children using screen-based electronics. And this is historically accurate in our profession, say the word TECHNOLOGY out loud at an early childhood conference and you are likely to get the evil eye stink eye side eye! Why? Because the images that typically come to mind are of computers, smart boards, laptops and televisions. And while we are all bombarded on a daily basis with screen-based consumer electronics *technology* is not limited to the device you are using to read this article. Technology has a much W I D E R and B R O A D E R definition than we might've previously considered: it includes tools, machines, utensils, weapons, instruments, housing, clothing, communication and transportation devices and the skills by which we both produce and use them. So in the heat of the battle, because of this, I proposed that perhaps it would serve us well to embrace a broader definition in an effort to end the verbiage wars which were hindering discussions about technology in early childhood.

Many of you know the I am a big fan of taking the time to clarify the use of industry lingo, "What do you mean by *academics*?" "Paint me picture of what you mean by *readiness*?" I do this because it's important to understand how specific words are being used within the context of specific conversations, in this case, conversations about *technology*. I believe that before we spend all our energy getting riled up about "having to use technology in the classroom," we spend time examining the parameters of the expectation and whether or not a broader definition makes more sense for our specific work with young children.

Children get plenty of screen time. Our programs do not need to contribute to their already indulgent diet of screen consumption. My main issue with screen based tech and young children is that in too many situations the tech is *replacing* real experiences, not adding to them. I believe that by clarifying definitions and moving beyond assumptions we will be able to show that children can be provided "opportunities to interact with technology" without having to plug anything in.

Here's a brief list for you to consider:

ART CENTER: Examples of *technology* include but are not limited to:

- Art spinner
- Crayons
- Compass
- Contact paper
- Easel
- Flyswatter
- Hole puncher
- Kiln
- Loom (weaving)
- Markers
- Paint brushes
- Paper
- Pencils
- Protractor
- Scissors
- Staple remover

Stapler
Staples

BLOCK CENTER: Examples of technology include but are not limited to:

Blocks
Boxes
Gears
Pendulum
Pulleys
Ramps
String
Transportation materials: cars, boats, tractors, etc.

BOOK CENTER: Examples of technology include but are not limited to:

Books (print)

CIRCLE TIME AREA: Examples of technology include but are not limited to:

Books (print)
Bean bags
Markers
Calendar
Flip chart
Musical instruments
Parachute
Device for playing music or songs

DRESS-UP CENTER: Examples of technology include but are not limited to:

Appliances
Buttons
Calculator
Clothespins
Computer keyboard (no cord, not plugged in, just the keyboard)
Old telephones (push button, rotary)
Egg beater
Diapers (for baby dolls)
Iron
Light bulbs
Snaps
Stroller
Suitcases
Sunglasses
Typewriter
Umbrella
Velcro
Zippers

MANIPULATIVE AREA: Examples of technology include but are not limited to:

Busy-boards
Locks
Magnifying glasses
Microscope
Pipettes
Scale
Slinky

Tape measure
Tweezers

FOOD/SNACK TIME: Examples of technology include but are not limited to:

Appliances
Blender
Cooking utensils
Fermentation (yeast = bread)
Fire (heat)
Microwave
Mixer
Oven
Refrigeration
Silverware
Stove
Warming tray
Running water
Indoor plumbing

PLAYGROUND TIME: Examples of technology include but are not limited to:

Ball
Bikes & Trikes
Buckets
Compass
Corn husker
Gutter
Hammers and nails
Tools in general
Hammock
Hose
Hula hoop
Jump rope
Parachute
Pendulum
Pulley
Pump (water)
Running water
Scooter
See-saw
Shovels
Sprinkler
Swing
Thermometer
Tires
Wagon
Washboard
Wheels
Wood working materials: hammer, nails, level, brace, vice

SENSORY TUB: Examples of technology include but are not limited to:

Funnel
Gutter
Plastic tubing
Egg beaters

Shovels and scoops
Wooden spoons

WRITING CENTER: Examples of technology include but are not limited to:

Calculator
Chalkboard
Clipboard
Compass
Markers
Crayons
Chalk
Envelopes
Paper
Pencil sharpener
Pencils
Pens
Protractor
Rulers
Scissors
Stencils
Tape
Typewriter
Whiteboard

What might you add?

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