The Highs and Lows of Digital Technology Integration in Kindergarten
The Team

• **Project Director**: Dr. Monica McGlynn-Stewart, George Brown College

• **Co-Researcher**: Dr. Tiffany MacKay, Peel District School Board

• **Research Assistants**: Leah Brathwaite, Lisa Hobman, Emma Mogyorodi, Yeh Uhn Park, George Brown College, Nicola Maguire, Ryerson University

• **Project Managers**: Eva Aboagye, Anna Gigli, George Brown College
Purpose

• To understand educators’ comfort levels and experience using DT for literacy learning

• To understand how young children use DT as a means of communicating their ideas
Perspectives from the Literature

- Young children are engaged with digital media in and out of school contexts (Burke, 2013; Clement, 2010)
- Educators are being asked to teach in ways that they did not learn as children or likely in pre-service (Darling-Hammond, 2006; Kirkwood, 2009)
- Educators need to carefully reflect on how best to incorporate DT approaches into their teaching (Radesky et al., 2015; Selwyn, 2011)
- Educators must find the balance between recognizing the skills students build in out-of-school digital practices, the curriculum, and preparation for a globalized knowledge society (Wimmer et al., 2012)
- Educators need to be knowledgeable about the potential benefits and concerns of DT for young children’s learning (NAEYC, 2012; Ernest et al., 2014)
Methodology

- Qualitative 3 year study - Sept 2015 to June 2018

- Interviews with educators, focus groups, and classroom observations were largely open ended

- Three- to six-year-old children in 14 classrooms are using the open-ended apps to document their experiences during play-based learning activities and their digital files are being archived and analyzed.
Findings
Phase 1: Pre-Implementation High

• Most felt “comfortable” or “very comfortable”

• They thought DT could provide “good” or “great” support for young children
Phase 1: Pre-Implementation High

“I think I would benefit from it immensely just in terms of my relationship with the kids, in being able to help them, being able to guide them, and keep them engaged in something that’s relevant in their world now.” (Educator, year one)
Phase 1: Contributing Factors

- Comfort with personal devices
- Prior experience with classroom devices (e.g., computers, iPads, digital cameras, projectors)
- Excitement over having new iPads and research assistant support
Phase 2: Early Reality Check

Challenges within the first 6 weeks

- Structural
- Technological
- Social
- Pedagogical
Phase 2: Contributing Factors

- Time
- Training
- Technical Expertise
- Infrastructure
- Challenging behaviours
Phase 3: Crawling Out of the Hole

Educators began developing and implementing strategies in midyear 1

- Structural
- Technological
- Social
- Pedagogical
Phase 3: Contributing Factors

- Increased self-confidence and self-efficacy
- Effective support and modelling
- Children’s learning
- Pedagogical applications
Phase 4: Continued High - Exploring, Sharing & Celebrating

- Problem-solving focus
- More open-minded
- More patient & reflective
- Creative & resourceful
Phase 4: Contributing Factors

Focus group led to:

- collaborative sharing and learning
- inspired pride and increased classroom use
Phase 5: Year End Fatigue - What Now?

The end of the school year brought some challenges:

• Not as many new ideas
• Plateaued on functionality
Phase 5: Contributing Factors

• Documentation
• Program planning
• Need for new pedagogical strategies
Phase 6: Flying High Again

- Positive about apps
- Pedagogical possibilities
- High levels of self-efficacy in both technical and pedagogical areas
Phase 6: Contributing Factors

- Year 2 workshop
- Tip sheets and curriculum suggestions
- Experienced, returning children
Phase 7: Cruising Along

- Peer support
- More interesting and complex work
- Fewer behavioural challenges
- More DT integration
Phase 7: Contributing Factors
Phase 7: Contributing Factors

- Continued learning by all
- DT use became routine
- Children are more independent and collaborative
- Improvements to the app 30 Hands
- Building on success
Implications

• Be patient and expect fluctuations in interest and engagement

• Have consistent routines and opportunities for inquiry

• Purposefully plan for DT integration

• Celebrate and showcase the children’s creations

• Have technical and pedagogical support available