



A Community of Learners

Informational Memo - Partnership with Erikson Institute for Early Childhood Education, Technology in Early Childhood Center (TEC)

TO: School Board
Superintendent Kocanda

FROM: Maureen Chertow Miller, *Director of Technology*

September 24, 2019

Overview & Background

The Technology in Early Childhood Center at Erikson Institute, led by Dr. Alexis Lauricella reached out to Winnetka Public Schools in the Summer of 2019 seeking a partner for a research project with Northwestern University and PBS Kids to better understand the use and effectiveness of touchscreen technology in elementary school classrooms. The TEC requested a letter of interest from District 36, and after meeting with Dr. Lauricella to learn the scope of the research project a [letter of interest and support](#) was provided.

According to the TEC, Winnetka Public School District (D36) was sought out based on “their exceptional focus on academic achievement and success for all students. In addition, it is clear that the Winnetka Public School District 36 is passionate about the use of intentional and developmentally appropriate use of technology to support student academic success and learning.”

The Research

The partnership between The Erikson Institute and The Winnetka Public Schools early childhood teachers will study the ways in which teachers incorporate and use technology in early childhood classrooms. This project is focused on documenting technology use in early childhood classrooms (K-2) with a specific interest in the use of iPads and STEM activities.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The goal of this research is to document the many different ways in which teachers are accessing and using technology in their early childhood classrooms with students. While many school districts have purchased technology for teacher and student use in the classroom, there are very few studies that document how teachers use the tools with students.

RESEARCH PARTICIPATION

The project would entail observations of teachers and students while using technology. Participation will be **voluntary** by the teachers and students. All participating teachers will complete an informed consent document to participate. Parents will also be informed with a letter sent home and asked about whether their child may participate in the observations. Due to the observational nature of this study, there will be minimal impact on the teachers' and students' classroom activities. Trained researchers from the TEC center will be present in the classroom observing and taking field notes, focusing only on the use of technology by teachers and students. The research will include observations of at least four classrooms within District 36 schools with each classroom being observed approximately 5 times throughout the 2019-2020 academic school year.

The results of these observations will be presented at academic conferences including the International Communication Association and the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) conferences and published in academic journals. All references to schools, teachers, and classrooms will be kept anonymous. This project will also be conducted at other schools and districts within Illinois and the researchers will create a guide with recommendations for best practices around technology use in early childhood classrooms that will be shared with all participating schools and posted on our [TEC Center website](#).

ABOUT TEC CENTER AND RESEARCHERS

The primary investigator (PI) for this project is Dr. Alexis Lauricella. Alexis R. Lauricella, Ph.D. is an associate professor at Erikson Institute and director of the Technology in Early Childhood (TEC) Center. Dr. Lauricella earned her Ph.D. in Developmental Psychology and her Master's in Public Policy from Georgetown University. Her research focuses on children's learning from media technology and parents' and teachers' attitudes toward and use of media technology with young children.

The research assistant (RA) for this project is Missi Jacobson, MSW. Missi is currently a doctoral student at Erikson Institute and Loyola University Chicago studying child development. Missi received her Master's degree in social work, specializing in children, youth, and families at Washington University in St. Louis.

Missi has been an RA for the Early Math Collaborative at Erikson Institute for 3 years. Additionally, Missi was formerly a preschool teacher in Skokie, IL.

Next Steps

- Teacher and student volunteers will be provided with a release statement to participate in the study.
- The researchers will meet with parents, students, and teachers to explain the research.
- A research summary and suggestions for best practices will be provided by the TEC and will inform the work towards our K-2 family/school media plan.
- Dr. Lauricella has volunteered to provide guidance for staff professional learning opportunities, parent focus groups, and parent institute sessions.