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GUIDING CHILDREN

Expert Interviews



Childhood Wonder

By Trish McClung

Psychologist Lev Vygotsky believed children learn better in a social context with the guidance of a more knowledgeable person who can point things out to them. For example, when you're watching a TV program with a child and say, "Did you see that?" or "Hey, look at that!", learning is happening in a social setting.

This has profound implications in today's world of technology, where kids are able to easily look up and acquire vast amounts of information. Just having access to the facts isn't enough. Kids still need guidance—though it shouldn't necessarily be heavy handed. But they benefit from our pointing things out and asking, "What do you think about that? What do you understand about that? What does that mean to you? How would you interpret that? Is that something you should avoid?" These kinds of questions can help children not only acquire knowledge, but also refine it.

The awe and wonder of kids is still there and always has been. I saw this when we took our eight-year-old grandson to Egypt. When we flew in and he saw the landscape, he exclaimed, "There it is . . . ancient Cairo!" It was incredible to see the sense of awe on his face.

No matter how tech-savvy children are, that natural sense of wonder is present, and we would be wise to tap into it when we're teaching them. Kids love to see things they haven't seen and experienced before. They can still be impressed.

DR. PATRICIA McCLUNGO

is Professor in Special Education and Chair of Early Childhood, Elementary and Special Education at Lee University in Cleveland, Tennessee. Her interests and research include the attrition of teachers in the field of special education, the use of narrative inquiry in data collection and analysis, and integrative learning. Trish is married to Alan McClung. They have a married adult daughter and two grandchildren.



Thinking Tech Through

By Yu-Kai Chou

Kids today have never experienced a world without a smartphone. But the key question in my mind is whether kids have guides to help them interpret everything. Games, for example: Some are purely violent, or nothing more than “button mashers.” They don’t spark creativity at all. But other games actually allow for patience, for long-term strategy, for collaboration and many other beneficial things.

But many parents will just take one strategy or another, either saying, “Oh, it’s all good so just do whatever you want” or “Hey, it’s all evil so stay away from all games.” Instead, we should invest time into thinking through the pros and cons of the games they are playing, maybe even play with them to provide that guidance. There will be technology no matter what, so the question is if parents are there to guide the context of how children interpret what they are experiencing.

In the end, I feel optimistic about the future, but I feel for the future generation. For kids who don’t have good support, teachers, parents and churches giving them the right context, there is a lot to be concerned about. There are so many things distracting them. Their mobile devices are talking, the TV is talking to them, the computer is talking to them. It’s so much easier for something negative to reach into their lives, into their hands, into their brains—and so we need to help them lay a solid foundation as who they are and not what they’re holding or seeing.

YU-KAI CHOU

is a pioneer in gamification and behavioral design, and author of Actionable Gamification: Beyond Points, Badges, and Leaderboards. He has taught at Google, Stanford, LEGO, Tesla, TEDx, and Huawei, among others, and for various governments. He is a Christ-follower and the proud father of twin daughters.



