**Introduction**

"Technology can change the way children think, what they learn, and how they interact with peers and adults. It can also teach the same old stuff in a thinly disguised version of the same old way."

*Seymour Papert*

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**MFLC vision:** Successful families.

**MFLC mission:** Successful partnerships.

Digital learning is an instructional practice that effectively uses technology to strengthen a student's learning experience. It emphasizes high-quality instruction and provides access to challenging content, feedback through formative assessment, opportunities for learning anytime and anywhere, and individualized instruction to ensure all students reach their full potential to succeed in college and a career. (Source: Alliance for Excellent Education)

Much digital learning takes place in a classroom with guidance from a teacher, but the world wide web (aka the web) hosts a plethora of online resources for parents and caregivers, too! Yet experienced web users know and new users will quickly discover that the web is a lot like a flea market - it has a vast selection of sites but not a lot of order to it! Some sites are offered by reputable sources and some by individuals selling products or showing off personal favorite items. It's not hard to find sites using a search engine like Google or a subject directory like Yahoo or YahooKids! but it can be hard to tell a hidden treasure from a waste of time.

The online resources in this document can help parents start finding treasures on the web but Great Websites for Kids at gws.ala.org/ is a virtual treasure chest of online resources! At Great Websites for Kids, you'll find a collection of websites evaluated by children’s librarians that are noteworthy for excellence and appropriateness. In making selections, the Great Websites for Kids Committee considers authorship, purpose, design, and content. The committee is made up of members of the Association for Library Service to Children, a division of the American Library Association.

Websites are rated on a scale of up to five stars and presented by subject (e.g., animals, the arts), timeframe (e.g., sites of the week and the month), and categories like most popular and top rated. Sites are updated regularly and newly accepted sites are added to the database three times a year. The committee also reviews all sites within the database twice a year to guarantee they are relevant, appropriate, and accessible.

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*Introduction adapted from gws.ala.org/about/selection-criteria.*
**Language, Reading & Writing: Toddler & Preschool**

*Brain Building in Progress* explains how caring adults lay the foundation for a lifetime of school success. Parents will find help nurturing and engaging children in interactive, enriching environments at home and in the community. Visit [www.brainbuildinginprogress.org/](http://www.brainbuildinginprogress.org/).

The *Department of Early Education and Care Parent Engagement and Family Support* website provides resources and links to support children’s healthy development and build a strong foundation for growth including printable brochures. Resources include infant/toddler and preschool guides on issues such as talking, health, science, technology, engineering, and math. Visit [www.mass.gov/edu/birth-grade-12/early-education-and-care/parent-and-family-support](http://www.mass.gov/edu/birth-grade-12/early-education-and-care/parent-and-family-support).

*Get Ready to Read* supports educators, parents, and young children in early literacy skill development. *Tips for Parents of Preschoolers* and *Skill-Building Activities* provide activities parents can do to support children’s literacy development. Visit [www.getreadytoread.org/](http://www.getreadytoread.org/).

The *National Association for the Education of Young Children For Families* page provides articles, links, and resources for parents of young children. Of particular interest are three dedicated links on Child Development; Reading and Writing; and Math, Music and More. Visit [families.naeyc.org/](http://families.naeyc.org/).

*PBS Parents* is filled with information on child development and early learning. It also links parents to *PBS Kids* where families can access free educational games and activities inspired by PBS programs. A PBS Parent Newsletter is also available. Visit [www.pbs.org/parents/](http://www.pbs.org/parents/).

*Raising A Reader Massachusetts* helps families strengthen the culture of reading at home. Resources include reading videos, newsletters, and Donna’s Book Bag blog with information, tips, and tools regarding the role family and early literacy play in building strong families and children. Visit [raisingareaderma.org/](http://raisingareaderma.org/).

The *Reach Out and Read Resource Center* has early literacy resources to support school readiness. Topics include *Choosing Books for Children*, *Reading Tips*, *Milestones of Early Literacy Development*, and a selection of *Audio Books*. Visit [www.reachoutandread.org/resource-center/](http://www.reachoutandread.org/resource-center/).

*Washington Learning Systems* promotes young children’s language development, literacy, and learning. The website features commercial products but also provides free articles and literacy resources including "on-the-go" resources in seven languages. Visit [www.walearning.com/](http://www.walearning.com/).

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*Pediatricians discourage media use by children under 2 years of age.*
Language, Reading & Writing: K-Grade 3

The International Reading Association has resources to help parents as they take on the critical role of their children’s first and most important teachers. The resources include book lists and brochures on reading related topics. Visit www.reading.org/informationfor/Parents.aspx.

The National Writing Project links to topics parents can use to encourage writing including topics such as helping children learn to write, supporting good writing instruction, and writing together. Visit www.nwp.org/cs/public/print/doc/resources/encourage_writing.csp.

PBS Parents is filled with information on child development and learning. It also links parents to PBS Kids where families can access educational games and activities inspired by PBS programs. A PBS Parent Newsletter is also available. Visit www.pbs.org/parents/.

PBS Reading Rockets is a multimedia literacy initiative offering resources on how young kids learn to read, why so many struggle, and how caring adults can help. Parents will also find a link to literacy resources in Spanish. Visit www.readingrockets.org/.

Read With Me eBooks develops children's literacy with story books. In the For Children sections, coaches give ideas to discuss books with children. In the For Teachers and Parents sections, a coach talks about literacy and suggests activities. More for Parents & Teachers explores the science of reading and provides additional links. Visit readwithme.cast.org/.

Reading is Fundamental (RIF) prepares and motivates children to read by delivering free books to children and families who need them most. The RIF website has activities, book lists, articles, brochures, multicultural materials, and information about book donations. Visit www.rif.org/.

Start with a Book provides downloadables, Themed Books and Activities for Summer Reading and Learning, and more for children 3 to 9 years old along with reading tips for parents in 11 languages. The Literacy Resources section has suggestions for word play, everyday literacy, and building background knowledge. Visit www.startwithabook.org/.

We Give Books enables anyone with access to the internet to put books in the hands of children who don’t have them, simply by reading online. Families will find a substantial collection of high quality books for children birth to 10 that can be sorted by age, genre, and author. Visit www.wegivebooks.org/.

“There is more treasure in books than in all the pirate's loot on Treasure Island and, best of all, you can enjoy these riches every day of your life.”

Walt Disney
Math: Toddler & Preschool*

Developing Early Math Skills explains how everyday interactions help children learn to understand math. Scroll down the page to see how families can build on children’s curiosity, have fun, and learn math together. Visit www.zerotothree.org/child-development/early-development/supporting-early-math-skills.html.

Early Childhood: Where Learning Begins – Mathematics provides math activities for parents and their 2 to 5 year old children. It explains that math is everywhere; is something children can enjoy; and uses questions to get children thinking. Visit www.kidsource.com/education/math.


Next Generation Preschool Math Videos show young children actively engaging with math content in a technology environment. The goal is to answer the question: Can engagement with activities in a media-rich curriculum improve low-income children’s early learning of number and equipartitioning? Visit nextgenmath.org/videos to see what’s going on.

Science: Toddler & Preschool*

Big Science for Little Hands on the Science World website provides activities for 3 to 5 year old children that serve as starting points for scientific explorations. Themes include small and large group activities which can be adapted to any environment. Visit www.scienceworld.ca/preschool.


The National Center for Science in Early Childhood website makes science available to preschool children including articles on existing science projects and book resources. Coming soon are science education resources. Visit www.cnsm.csulb.edu/depts/scied/NCSEC/mission.asp.

When early childhood activities integrate math, science and engineering shows how activities in kindergarten support overlapping math, science, and engineering learning. Visit nstacommunities.org/blog/2012/02/12/when-early-childhood-activities-integrate-math-science-and-engineering.

*Pediatricians discourage media use by children under 2 years of age.
Math: K-Grade 3

**Bedtime Math** is a fun way for kids to do math in their heads and paper and pencil as needed. Tips for doing bedtime math, handy ideas for families, and even a parent blog make getting started easy. Visit [bedtimemath.org](http://bedtimemath.org/).

**Maths is Fun** is a resource for practice in numbers, data, measurement, pre- and early-algebra, and links to resources for first through eighth grade. A dictionary, worksheets, tutoring forum, puzzles, and teaching games are provided. Visit [www.mathsisfun.com](http://www.mathsisfun.com/).

**Mathslice** lets you play online math games like Math Wheel (math terms), Jeopardy (addition), and Finding Nemo (direction), generate custom math worksheets on topics such as telling time, fractions, and money, and more. Visit [www.mathslice.com](http://www.mathslice.com/).

The [National Council of Teachers of Math Family Resources](http://www.nctm.org/resources/families.aspx) page helps families understand how math is taught; make a difference in children’s attitude and motivation; and make homework more effective -- and fun. Visit [www.nctm.org/resources/families.aspx](http://www.nctm.org/resources/families.aspx).

Science: K-Grade 3

The [NASA Space Place](http://spaceplace.nasa.gov/menu/parents-and-educators/) Parents and Educators page provides space, sun, earth, and solar system related choices for children to play (games, puzzles, quizzes), do (activities, books, coloring), and explore (fun facts, videos, pictures). Tabs connect to resources on space topics. Visit [spaceplace.nasa.gov/menu/parents-and-educators/](http://spaceplace.nasa.gov/menu/parents-and-educators/).

**National Geographic Kids** puts news, games, photos, videos, information about animals and countries, and fun stuff at kids’ fingertips. Links to animal jam and little kids pages will engage children and parents alike. Visit [kids.nationalgeographic.com/kids/](http://kids.nationalgeographic.com/kids/).


**Climate Kids**, NASA’s Eyes on the Earth, offers kids clear answers to questions on global climate change through sections on weather, air, the ocean, fresh water, carbon, energy, plants and animals and technology. It also includes educational games, activities, crafts, videos and information on green careers. Visit [climatekids.nasa.gov](http://climatekids.nasa.gov/).
Building Home/School Connections

The Council of the Great City Schools’ Parent Roadmaps to the Common Core Standards in English language arts and math provide guidance in English and Spanish about what children are learning and how parents can support learning. Visit www.cgcs.org/Page/328.


The Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks on the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education website provide learning standards for the arts, English language arts, foreign languages, comprehensive health, history and social science, mathematics, and science and technology/engineering. Visit www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks/current.html.

The National Coalition for Parent Involvement in Education promotes family involvement in children’s education and fosters relationships between home, school, and community. Resources can be viewed by audience and subject. Visit www.ncpie.org/resources.

The National PTA has resources to keep children healthy and safe and tools to support children’s school success. These include Parents’ Guide to Student Success brochures that explain the Common Core State Standards. The brochures are available in English and Spanish. Visit pta.org/parents/content.cfm?ItemNumber=2583&RDtoken=7983&userID.

Project Appleseed provides multiple tools to support parent involvement. The Parental Involvement Pledge is a learning compact that allows parents to formalize their commitment to working with their child's school through a written agreement. The Pledge also provides a survey of parent volunteer interests. Visit projectappleseed.org/.

The School Community Network helps create learning environments where students thrive. Resources for Parents and Recursos en Español sections allow parents to search for resources by age group, topic, or key word. Visit www.schoolcommunitynetwork.org/.

The Parent and Family Engagement website of the U. S. Department of Education provides resources to help parents and caregivers become partners in their children’s education. Links to events, webinars, and Free Resources for Educational Excellence that address a wide variety of interests and needs are provided. Visit www.ed.gov/parent-and-family-engagement.
Taking Advantage of Out of School Time

**American Library Association Great Websites for Kids** is a treasure chest of websites for children up to age 14. Websites rated with up to five stars are presented by subject (e.g., animals, the arts), timeframe (e.g., sites of the week and the month), and categories like most popular and top rated. Websites are evaluated and updated regularly. Visit [gws.ala.org/](http://gws.ala.org/).


**Fun Brain**, created for children ages preschool through grade 8, provides educational games, online books, and comics. It offers more than 100 interactive games that develop skills in math, reading, and literacy. Kids can also read books and comics including **Diary of a Wimpy Kid**, **Amelia Writes Again**, and **Brewster Rocket**. Visit [www.funbrain.com/](http://www.funbrain.com/).


**Kids.gov** is the official children’s portal for the U.S. government. It links children, parents and teachers to information and services geared to children’s learning level and interests. The website is organized by audience, Grades K-5, Grades 6-8, and Educators, with tabs divided into subjects like Arts, Math, and History. Visit [kids.usa.gov/index.shtml](http://kids.usa.gov/index.shtml).

**Parents’ Choice** is the nation’s oldest non-profit guide to quality children’s media and toys including Parents’ Choice awards. A **Reading, Learning, and Play** section presents reading lists, ideas for learning, and activities for play and exploration, all created to encourage families to read more, play more and learn more. Visit [www.parents-choice.org/](http://www.parents-choice.org/).

**Shidonni** is developing the next generation of virtual worlds for kids by providing a safe environment where kids and their parents can create imaginary worlds and animals, play games, and interact with friends. Visit [www2.shidonni.com/v2/LandingPage.aspx](http://www2.shidonni.com/v2/LandingPage.aspx).

**Wonderopolis** is a place where wonder and learning are nurtured through discovery, creativity, and imagination. It features “wonders,” a “wonder playground,” and a “wonder of the day.” See the wonders and nominate your family’s “wonder of the day.” Visit [wonderopolis.org](http://wonderopolis.org).
Dual/English Language Learners

The Spanish-English website Colorin Colorado provides information, activities, and advice for educators and families of English language learners (ELLs). A dedicated section for families and a search function make it family-friendly. Visit www.colorincolorado.org/.

The Education Trust supports academic achievement for all students at all levels in order to close achievement and opportunity gaps that leave many young people on the margins. Education Trust Resources in Spanish include a presentation on the education status of Latinos and several guides for parents. Visit www.edtrust.org/dc/resources/en-espanol.

Get Ready to Read supports educators, parents, and young children in early literacy skill development before kindergarten. The home page allows visitors to indicate their preference for information in Spanish, Chinese, Korean, and Arabic. Visit www.getreadytoread.org/.


The International Children’s Digital Library is an online collection of books from all over the world. Users can locate books by age, subject, type, and language. Find books in over 20 languages when you visit www.childrenslibrary.org/icdl/SimpleSearchCategory?ilang=English.

Los Niños en Su Casa offers website resources in Spanish. A search function allows users to look for resources by type (e.g., books and articles, CDs/DVDs) and subject (e.g., health and safety, child development). Visit www.losninosensucasa.org/resource.php.

The Reach Out and Read Resource Center provides English and Spanish versions of Milestones of Early Literacy Development showing development stages of reading for young children. Visit www.reachoutandread.org/resource-center/literacy-materials/literacy-milestones/.


Special Education

The Center for Applied Special Technology helps expand learning opportunities through principles for curriculum development that give all individuals equal opportunities to learn known as Universal Design for Learning (UDL). The website provides tools including a book builder and a library with multiple resources. Visit www.cast.org and bookbuilder.cast.org/.

The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education website provides a wide range of resources including Guidance for Special Education Parent Advisory Councils (in three languages), A Parent’s Guide to Special Education (in ten languages), links to state and national organizations and more. Visit www.doe.mass.edu/sped/parents.html.

Early Intervention provides family-centered services to children between birth and three years of age. Children with developmental difficulties or at risk of developmental disabilities due to certain birth or environmental circumstances may be eligible. Visit www.mass.gov/eohhs/gov/departments/dph/programs/family-health/early-intervention/.

The Federation for Children with Special Needs provides information, support, and assistance to parents of children with disabilities, their professional partners, and their communities. This includes MassPAC, a statewide organization that supports special education parent advisory councils and the professionals who collaborate with them. Visit fcsn.org/index.php and fcsn.org/masspac/.

LD Online helps individuals reach their potential by providing accurate and up-to-date information and advice about learning disabilities and ADHD. The website features articles, monthly columns, essays, children’s writing and artwork, a resource guide, forums, and a referral directory. Visit www.ldonline.org.


Perkins School for the Blind provides education and services for children and adults who are blind, deafblind, or visually impaired including the Braille and Talking Book Library. Visit www.perkins.org and www.perkins.org/community-programs/btbl/.

The National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities provides resources on disabilities in children and youth; programs and services for young people with disabilities; IDEA, the nation’s special education law; research-based practices, and a gateway to related public information. Visit nichcy.org/, nichcy.org/espanol, and nichcy.org/org-gateway.
General Education & Information for Parents

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website is a health communication channel that gets 500 million page views per year. It provides credible, reliable information on a wide range of topics including safe and healthy kids and youth to help children develop habits and behaviors that influence their life-long health. Visit www.cdc.gov and www.cdc.gov/family/kids/.

Grandparents.com strengthens ties within families by giving timely information and expert advice that promote family well-being. A Grandparents Toolkit and a section on Grandkids provide ideas and resources on a wide range of topics. Visit www.grandparents.com/.

Let’s Move is an initiative, launched by First Lady Michelle Obama, dedicated to solving the problem of childhood obesity. The website has information on eating healthy, getting active, and taking action to help America’s children grow up healthy. The website is also available in Spanish. Visit www.letsmove.gov/.

The National Association for the Education of Young Children is the world’s largest organization working on behalf of young children. A For Families section provides information and resources on child development, reading and writing, and math, music and more. Visit www.naeyc.org and families.naeyc.org/.


Zero to Three helps parents improve the lives of infants and toddlers. The website provides articles on young children and resources such as Little Kids, Big Questions, podcasts that translate research into practices parents and caregivers can apply. Visit www.zerotothree.org and www.zerotothree.org/about-us/funded-projects/parenting-resources/podcast/.

The What Works Clearinghouse, a project of the U. S. Department of Education’s Institute of Education Sciences, is a central and trusted source of scientific evidence for what works in education. Schools and families alike can find publications and reviews on education topics ranging from early childhood to college and career preparation. Visit ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/.

“An investment in knowledge pays the best interest.”

Benjamin Franklin

January 2014
Massachusetts Authors & Illustrators*


Marc Brown Studios provides information about the author’s many activities and projects including one of America’s favorite personalities, Arthur. The Kids’ page lets visitors know what books Arthur is reading and links to the PBS Kids website. Visit marcbrownstudios.com/.

The Official Eric Carle Web Site features FAQs (frequently asked questions), newsletters, downloads, slide shows that delve into the author/illustrator’s artistry, and a photo and video gallery with audio translations of The Very Hungry Caterpillar. Visit www.eric-carle.com/home.html.

The website of Nancy Cote, award-winning author/illustrator of numerous children’s books, features vivid illustrations that will give children and parents much to talk about as well as a blog describing her latest projects. Visit www.nancycote.com/.

A visit to the website of Ed Emberley is just the thing for an artist in training including downloadable activity books and step by step instructions for drawing with basic shapes. The author/illustrator’s bio explains that he has written and illustrated around 80 books including seven picture books and 13 drawing books. Visit www.edemberley.com/pages/main.aspx.

The Grace Lin website provides fun facts about the author/illustrator, a tour of the studio where she works, her blog, and activities including coloring pages, crafts, recipes, performance scripts and adaptations, and Chinese lessons. Visit www.gracelin.com/.

Storyteller, author, and historian Irene Smalls became an author in kindergarten after learning about the beauty of language through song, games, and dance. Her website provides a bio, black history information, and a link to her Literacize project that uses physical exercise to help increase reading achievement. Visit www.irenesmalls.com/irenesmalls.com/Welcome.html.

The award-winning author of over 300 books, Jane Yolen, has been called the Hans Christian Andersen of America and the Aesop of the 20th century. Her website has information on her books as well as essays, poems, a journal, an FAQ (frequently asked questions), and a bio. Children and parents will find much to explore. Visit janeyolen.com/.

*Some author/illustrator websites feature products for sale.
Places to Visit in Massachusetts*

The Boston Children’s Museum provides a hands-on child-centered environment in which children freely and joyfully explore, engage, and connect with the world. The museum’s website also provides suggestions to continue the learning at home including making butter, music, and play dough. Visit www.bostonkids.org/.

There are two Discovery Museums. At the Children’s Discovery Museum, young children learn while playing. At the Science Discovery Museum, older children explore scientific concepts and creativity. Visit www.discoverymuseums.org/.

The Ecotarium is a science and nature museum focused on exploration and discovery. Visitors will find exhibits, animals from otters to chinchillas to bald eagles, outdoor explorations, and a planetarium. Visit www.ecotarium.org/.

The Eric Carle Museum of Picture Book Art inspires love of art and reading through picture books. It collects, preserves, presents, and celebrates picture books and illustrations from around the world. A virtual tour on the museum website provides a preview of the museum experience. Visit www.carlemuseum.org/Home.

The Holyoke Children’s Museum features exhibits that invite interaction and programs to promote learning and self-discovery. Parents are encouraged to participate, have fun, and enjoy their children’s amazement. Visit www.childrensmuseumholyoke.org/.

The Springfield Science Museum is a collection of natural history specimens and a repository of arts and curiosities. Its Seymour Planetarium is the oldest American–built planetarium. Visit www.springfieldmuseums.org/the_museums/science/.

The USS Constitution Museum keeps stories of the USS Constitution battleship and her history alive. It provides a hands-on environment where families have fun and learn as they explore history together. Visit www.ussconstitutionmuseum.org/.

Zoo New England inspires people to protect and sustain the natural world for future generations. Fun experiences integrate wildlife and conservation, research, and education at Stone and Franklin Park sites. Visit www.zoonewengland.org/.

*Your local library may have free or reduced passes to these sites.