

## Use photography, moviemaking to expand students' early learning

It's fairly common for parents to ask children about their school day. Often times, the child's answers are incomplete and unfulfilling to parents. By infusing photography and video into the early learning program, you can engage young learners while giving parents a glimpse into the school day as a conversation starter.

### Key points

- Photography, video engage children and families
- Use simple, free apps to export multimedia
- Multimedia builds child's vocabulary, social skills

"Parents typically ask their child what they did in school, and the child might respond indifferently," said Nancy Penchev, media and instructional technology coordinator for the Scheck Hillel Community School in North Miami Beach, Fla.

"Photography and video open the lines of communication and are a great way to share with families what you're doing."

A multimedia presentation, for example, could be used to show parents what their child is learning and the curriculum focus, which allows for active engagement.

"For instance, a parent could tell their child that they saw the picture of the child painting apples in the classroom," Penchev said. "That encourages family involvement and builds a conversation between parents and children."

Photography and video can also provide ways for early learning professionals to share what they're doing with colleagues.

"I use Twitter and often tweet about what we're doing in the classroom," Penchev said. "That allows me to receive feedback from colleagues and peers about our curriculum."

In all cases, remember to review your district's policies on the use of video recording to ensure they comply with federal and state regulations, specifically with respect to FERPA and the confidentiality requirements under IDEA Part C.

Also be sure to obtain parental consent. Most schools have parents sign a release form for photographs and videos, Penchev said.

"If teachers are concerned about privacy, they can create a letter explaining that photographs and videos will be used to communicate student learning with parents ... and ask parents to sign to give permission that they understand the privacy needs."

Consider the following strategies to infuse photogra-

phy and moviemaking in early learning settings:

❑ **Keep it simple.** Advise teachers to use the tools they have. For instance, every teacher has a cellphone. Use the camera feature for pictures that can later be shared with families.

"I use the photography tools on my iPad and download apps that are easy and free to use such as Perfect Video where I can combine pictures and video clips," Penchev said.

❑ **Select apps.** Look for tools that allow for exporting of images and video.

"If you can save a file from the app to your camera roll, that will become your best tool," Penchev said. "Ultimately, if it saves the file within the app and doesn't let you take it out, it will require more steps than you need."

❑ **Engage parents.** Photography and video help parents with conversation starters at home.

"Parents will open the email when they know a picture from school is coming and will view it right away," Penchev said. "At my school, the teachers take pictures on iPads and then send a daily note to parents, which includes text, pictures, and videos from the classroom."

After all, if you send a full text email to parents, they probably won't read the entire message. But if you send an email with pictures, they'll read it and get involved, Penchev said.

❑ **Focus on skills development.** Photography and moviemaking helps children develop social skills.

"I let the children use the iPad to take pictures," Penchev said. "I'll ask them to take pictures of things that are red, and we then talk about those items."

That helps increase their vocabulary because they have to talk about it, she said. Also, include discussion points in materials you send home with children.

❑ **Ensure staff training.** Staff members may be nervous about using technology.

"I often tell them that they're not going to break it," Penchev said. "It's important for staff to touch and play with the devices. There's nothing staff can do wrong by touching the buttons."

Ultimately, staff can't expect to use such technology in the curriculum without experience.

"I teach coding but I don't know how to code too much," Penchev said. "That's OK because the children will figure it out. With many children, I can hand them the iPad and even the 3-year-olds can tell us how to take pictures and use apps."

*Penchev will present the workshop *Photography and Moviemaking in the Early Childhood Classroom* at the 2017 National Future of Education Technology Conference, to be held January 24-27 in Orlando, Fla. Learn more at [www.fetc.org](http://www.fetc.org). ■*