Technology Use Position Statement

This statement is intended primarily to provide guidance to those working with Sixpence programs, serving children from birth through age 3.

Infants and toddlers are growing up in environments saturated with a variety of traditional and new technologies at a time of critical brain development, building secure relationships and establishing healthy behaviors. Technology and interactive media are tools that can promote effective learning and development when they are used intentionally, within the framework of developmentally appropriate practice, to support learning goals established for individual children. Technology and media should not exclude, diminish or interfere with children's healthy communication, social interactions, play and other developmentally appropriate activities with peers, family members and educators/caregivers. Note: "educators/caregivers" is the term used in this statement to capture the role of any adult working with any child in any capacity/environment.

In aligning with the latest American Academy of Pediatrics recommendations, Sixpence offers the following principles to guide the use of technology and interactive media:

Using Developmentally Appropriate Practices to Guide Technology Use

A mindful approach should be used when selecting and using technology as it enables healthy development, learning, creativity, interactions with others and relationships. The use of technology should align with curriculum goals, a child-centered and play-oriented approach, hands-on exploration, and relationship building.

Technology and media should not replace activities such as creative play, real-life exploration, physical activity, outdoor experiences, conversations and social interactions that are important for children's development. Technology and media should be used to support learning, and to expand young children's access to new content, not as an isolated activity, or as the only exposure/experience with the content.

Using Technology Appropriately

Technology should be used in moderation, and to enhance educational experiences, not to replace essential activities, experiences and materials.

Sixpence joins the public health community in discouraging the use of screen media for children under the age of 2. Because of their immature symbolic cognition, memory, and attention skills, infants and young toddlers cannot learn from traditional digital media, as they do from interactions with educators/caregivers. For children 2-5 years of age, screen time should be limited to 1 hour per day of high quality programming with an emphasis on the educator's/caregiver's role in co-viewing and re-teaching the content.

Using Technology Effectively

Effective uses of technology are active, hands-on, engaging and empowering. They give the child control, provide adaptive scaffolds to ease the accomplishment of tasks, and are used as one of many options to support children's learning. Effective technology tools connect media and activities with an emphasis on co-viewing and co-participation with educators/caregivers to help children understand what they are seeing and to help them apply what they learn to the world around them.

Using Informed / Professional Judgment about Technology

Professional judgment is required to determine when a specific use of technology is age appropriate, individually appropriate, and culturally and linguistically appropriate. The educator's/caregiver's role is critical in making certain that thoughtful planning, careful implementation, reflection and evaluation guide decision making about how to integrate technology into the classroom and home.

Strengthening Home-School Connections with Technology Use

Technology tools offer new opportunities for educators and parents to build relationships and maintain ongoing communication. Educators/caregivers who model the effective use of technology also help parents make responsible choices about technology use at home, extend classroom learning activities into the home, and encourages co-viewing and co-participation between parents and their children. Educators/caregivers should ensure that the use of technology serves to strengthen adult-child and peer relationships.

Ensuring Digital Equity for All Children

Assistive technology must be available as needed to provide equitable access for children with special needs. When used thoughtfully, technology can empower young children, increasing their independence and supporting their inclusion in classes with their peers.

Technology tools can be effective for dual language learners by providing access to a family's home language and culture while supporting English language learning. Digital technologies allow teachers to find culturally and linguistically appropriate stories, games, music, and activities for every child when there may be no other way to obtain those resources.

Informing Usage through Research and Revision

More research is needed on how young children use and learn with technology and to better understand any short and long term effects. Research-based evidence about what constitutes quality technology and interactive media for young children is needed to guide policy and inform practice and to ensure that technology and media tools are used in effective, engaging and appropriate ways in early childhood care and education programs.