Lisa Kervin: Welcome back for the second podcast in our series.

In our last podcast, we focused on the role and opportunities for adults in children's digital play.

This podcast will focus on using digital resources to complement, supplement, and enhance children's learning.

Steven Howard: Last time, we gave a suggestion of creating a digital story using children's photos or videos in iMovie.

The movie that gets created was not the focus for us. Instead, we were interested in the learning, play, and meaningful interactions this can create. You may have thought of other ways to introduce digital resources into your children's play. To expand their choice, their agency, their learning, or their interactions.

If so, we'd love to hear about them, so we can share these amongst our communities of practice.

This time, we're shifting the conversation to think about how digital technologies can be used to complement, supplement, and enhance learning. Like before, we'll focus on opportunities that involve only small changes from what you're likely already doing.

Have your children ever heard anything on the radio, in a story, or on TV, and asked you about it? These situations have the potential for digital to take us places that we couldn't otherwise go. I was recently reading a story about five busy beavers with children, which was sent to one of the children by their Canadian grandmother.

However, the child, Avery, didn't know what a beaver was, or why they were chomping on trees in the story. We used YouTube to look up videos that showed how real life beavers use their teeth to chop down trees. Avery wondered why the beaver was doing this. So next we investigated

As we return to the story, Avery talked about what the beavers were going to do with those trees, and predicted how many beavers he thought might live in the dam that they'll build.

An early childhood service I visited just recently took this a step further, with wombat burrows. Following children's questions after reading Wombat Stew, they used their iPad to investigate wombat burrows and plan how they might

build their own, before making an above ground, child sized burrow out of sticks and other loose materials.

Planning and drawing on the iPad allowed quick and easy addition and modification of the materials that the children thought they would need. Checking and changing burrow sizes and shapes

These examples illustrate how we're able to move seamlessly in and out of the digital to support learning through conversation, giving children access to images and videos that they wouldn't see in person. It allows us to follow children's natural curiosity and interest to help them learn about the world.

One of the exciting things about digital technology is the ability to access information and experiences that wouldn't otherwise be possible.

Lisa Kervin: Another experience we ran at our very own Early Start Discovery Space with a group of preschool aged children was bridge building using Lego. Children were asked to design and build a bridge that could hold the weight of a toy car.

In introducing the activity with the children, Images of bridges were presented and discussed. An on site engineer led a video call with the children to discuss what makes a bridge strong. As the children started to plan and build their bridges, they took photos of their process and emerging bridges so they could stitch these together as a stop motion video to show their friends and family.

Partway through building their bridges, we connected to the engineer via FaceTime, so they could see the children's bridges in progress and offer them some formative feedback for what next steps in their building might strengthen their creations even further. At the end of the activity, children were supported to select and sequence their photos to create a video diary of their bridge building process.

Conversation and time together can help young children access experiences that otherwise would not be possible. Two year old Owen wanted to be able to read like his big brother. An app where letters needed to be arranged to make words was the focus of his attention. Now we offer this example not to endorse or disendorse this kind of app for young children, but to encourage you to look at the nature of the interaction.

There was closeness. Owen was very much in control. There was just in time support when needed for him to be successful. There was talk about the content

of the app, but above all, it was a close and intimate and positive experience. If it were used on its own, though, for solitary play, quite a different experience potentially would evolve for the young child.

Thinking about this type of play that digital apps can provide, what it enables and what it constrains alongside what it could look like with purposeful and meaningful interactions is something worth considering.

Steven Howard: All of these examples show us how play doesn't need to be either digital or non digital, but actually plays.

Play can flow seamlessly between the two and still be a positive play and learning experience. Recent research tells us that children don't necessarily see the differences across digital and non digital experiences. In fact, freedom to move between the two, as their play dictates, gives them a sense of agency and ownership of how they piece together knowledge.

It isn't just about what they do but also how they do it. Do you worry about the time children spend looking at screens? For us, we are interested more in what they do when they're looking at those screens. Is it simply passive viewing, and there's likely little productive learning? Or, for example, when a child is watching cricket, a sport they love.

Do they have their own bat in hand, copying the actions they see on the screen, and sharing a feeling of being part of the team? Are they connecting with family or friends? Are they exploring and creating? Are they testing out new skills and abilities like recognizing letters or reading simple words?

When you share a video on an interactive whiteboard, What are the opportunities for children to use their bodies and other resources to play alongside? We seek ways for educators and parents to build on children's interests to encourage digital and non digital play.

Lisa Kervin: Digital technology is often seen as something for children's learning rather than as children's learning. We may stop a child from looking at a screen simply because it's a screen. We encourage you to flip this around and think about digital technology as neither inherently good or bad. Instead, think about what the digital experience is, with whom, how, and to what benefit.

In our examples, digital aspects of the play and learning allowed educators to extend and enrich play and have meaningful conversations with the children.

Providing opportunities for children to explore and experiment with a range of digital experiences and technologies with you as their educator is important for helping develop children who can eventually manage their own healthy digital diets. This will be surrounded by the digital world as they continue throughout their lives and we want to support them to be able to make good, safe and productive digital decisions.

We suggest that digital technology doesn't need to be just for learning, but children's use of and exploration of digital technology for meaningful outcomes that connect to their interests, their life experiences, and their curiosities is what matters most.

We suggest for you some use of digital resources to complement, supplement and extend play and learning. Perhaps you might start with book reading. Let's consider an example that you could try in your service. If you think about the picture book Where the Forest Meets the Sea by Jeanne Baker.

Take some time, read the book, listen and watch to how the children are responding, and follow their interests. Perhaps you might draw on some digital resources like YouTube Kids, Google Images, and Augmented Reality apps to help the children respond post reading that book. You might think about using an augmented reality app like Under the Sea, on the iPad, projected onto the wall, and as the children move about the space within the view of the iPad, they can see themselves immersed in the underwater scene projected on the wall.

We wonder, what conversations that might lead to as the children connect the picture book experience with the digital experience. You might think about the conversations that emerge from that. What animals would you see in the Great Barrier Reef? If you stood really still, what would you hear? How would you catch a fish?

And think about other questions that might emerge from the notion of the rainforest. In whatever direction you take though, critical are that you follow the children's interest, that the children have choice, agency, and that the interactions are quality.

Steven Howard: Make sure to check out the resources we've curated for you .

We'll chat with you again next time for the third podcast in this series. Thanks for listening..