

Announcing the Seventh Annual Kids at Play Interactive (KAPi) Awards



A note to our readers: The following is copy that was posted on December 29 as a press release. The awards were given in a ceremony last week (January 7) in Las Vegas.

LAS VEGAS, Dec. 29, 2015 Which commercial children's technology products have raised the bar when it comes to innovation and quality? Once again 14 independent experts have taken on this difficult question, and the result is the seventh annual KAPi Awards, to be awarded on January 7th at CES® 2016 in Las Vegas, Nevada.

Created by Living in Digital Times and *Children's Technology Review*, the KAPi awards "is an attempt to cast a broad net over all things tech and kids, and see what rises to the top," said Warren Buckleitner of Children's Technology Review who serves as the awards coordinator. Every children's interactive media product, from any country, from any size publisher, as long as it is sold commercially in the domestic United States, is eligible. All products from apps, video games and DVDs to websites, smart toys and eBooks are included.

This year, the KAPis have an additional partner and a broader reach, with the addition of Digital Kids Media. "The KAPi winners represent the best in education and entertainment tech products for the digital native and their connected families. Digital Kids is proud to join Living in Digital Times and Children's Technology Review to host the 7th annual award show," says Tonda Bunge Sellers, president of Digital Kids. "As stand-outs in play and learning, the KAPi winners are a perfect example of a child's immersive digital lifestyle where there are no longer boundaries between physical and digital, and how the best products naturally and magically weave in learning."

"This year set a new record, both for the number of entries and for the amount of deliberation between the judges," said Robin Raskin, founder and president, Living in Digital Times, who created the award in 2009. "This year's selections represent some of the best ways to inspire kids love of tech. There's no place better than CES to present these awards. Kids are our digital future."

The winners will be on display during CES in the Digital Kids Media Booth, Sands Expo, Level 2, Booth #74866. Awards will be given out at the KAPi cocktail reception, at 5:30 p.m. in the Venetian, Level 4, Lando Room 4301.

The 2016 KAPi Award Winners:

Emerging Pioneer: Ayah Bdeir. The co-founder of the Open Hardware Summit, a TED Senior Fellow and an alumna of the MIT Media Lab, Ayah Bdeir is the founder and CEO of littleBits, an electronic building block kit. Bdeir is an engineer, interactive artist and one of the leaders of the open source hardware movement.

Lifetime Pioneer: Shigeru Miyamoto, Senior Managing Director, Creative Fellow, Nintendo Co., Ltd. Mario, Donkey Kong, The Legend of Zelda are household names for one reason: Shigeru Miyamoto. Called the "Spielberg of video games" and "the soul of Nintendo" Shigeru has never stopped innovating. Super Mario Maker now lets children become the game designer.

Best App or Product for Younger Children: The Foos Coding 5+ by codeSpark. Ideal for future programmers, The Foos are animated creatures that present challenges that can be solved by code. The better you do, the greater the challenge, making The Foos an excellent first coding experience.

Best App or Product for Older Children: View-Master by Mattel. 75 years ago the View-Master toy offered a new way to view the world, through stereoscopic vision. This year's View-Master leverages the power of your smartphone and Google Cardboard to unlock VR (virtual reality) content. Once again you feel like you're inside the image.

Best Maker Product: Circuit Stickers by Chibitronics. We all know how stickers work which is why the simplicity works so well when matched with a make your own circuit. These peel-and-stick electrical elements give you a new way to experiment with batteries and LEDs, to make things like electronic greeting cards. No soldering required.

Best Digital/Physical Bridge: Moff Band by Moff, Inc. All kids wriggle and move. Now all that activity can be translated into information, and delivered to your smartphone thanks to this durable, affordable Bluetooth slap bracelet.

Best Hardware: Dot and Dash by Wonder Workshop. Meet your kids' first robots: Dot and Dash. Their mission is to entertain and delight, but also to teach children to learn to code. They respond to voice, can dance and sing and come with a host of apps that together comprise a complete learning system for future coders.

Most Innovative: Edwin the Duck by Pi Lab. This Rubber Ducky is the one, because no other floating toy has been this smart. After some time in his charging nest, Edwin can become a lullaby playing night light or a bath thermometer, with LEDs that indicate if the water is too cold, too hot, or just right.

Best Content Distribution System: YouTube Kids by Google. Here's a welcome sign of leadership in the name of kids from a corporate giant-- namely Google. YouTube Kids comes closer to leveraging the raw power of YouTube, and its endless supply of puppy videos, for a kid audience. No, it's not perfect. But YouTube kids is a step in the right direction.

Best Product for Schools: GoNoodle by GoNoodle. Got a group of kids and a few spare minutes? What teacher doesn't? GoNoodle -- the video streaming service for classrooms can turn this time into a mini-gym class, or a trip to a Zumba studio. Some videos reinforce grade level lessons, and they work at home, too.

Best Creativity Product: Stikbot by Zing. Free app/toy combos are common, but this one does something unusual. The free app works without the toy, making it easy to make your own stop motion productions. However, you will probably want to buy the Stikbots, because they're cheap and so easy to pose, with suction cups for feet and hands.

Honorable Mentions

Over the course of six hours of debates by 14 jurors discussing over 200 products (a record number), some noteworthy titles received enough votes to receive an honorable mention.

Bluebee Pals by Kayle Concepts LLC. You can sync (or pair) your car to your phone with Bluetooth. So why not a stuffed animal? That's the idea behind Bluebee Pals, Bluetooth-enabled plush toy animals can "mouth" along with stories or other learning apps.

Compose Yourself by ThinkFun. This is a DIY kit for composing music. The core of the kit is a set of clear plastic one-bar measures of music that can be flipped or reversed. This creates a score that can be played back or printed.

Crazy Gears by Seven Academy. This leveled problem solving physics game lets children freely manipulate gears, chains, rods, pulleys and more to pull themselves to the next level. Jurors liked how this app gives children plenty of opportunities to make mistakes (also known as debugging).

KidiZoom Action Cam by VTech. Like a low cost GoPro for children, this cube-shaped camera has a 1.4-inch color screen/viewfinder with a speaker that makes it possible to instantly view or edit your videos. The editor includes visual effects and mini-games; plus some animated intros. The 128 MB onboard storage, plus the micro SD slot give this camera some serious power, at a toy store price.

LEGO Dimensions by LEGO. This is LEGO's answer to the collectibles genre (e.g., amiibo, The Skylanders and Disney Infinity). Characters from different games join forces in worlds outside their own.

R.E.V. by WowWee USA, Inc. The great thing about R.E.V. is it combines artificial intelligence and racecar tracks. So you don't even need an opponent or a track to have a good time.

Newsela by Newsela is a web-based news delivery system. Each article has five levels of complexity, for grades 2-12, along with associated comprehension quizzes to give parents and teachers insights into a child's reading strengths and weaknesses.

Sky Viper Stunt Drone by Skyrocket Toys. Your chances of getting bonked in the head have never been greater this year. The jurors agreed that Sky Viper was one of the easiest to fly, and affordable too.

Peter and the Wolf by Giants Are Small. Beautiful orchestra music and a zany, playful story meets limited but innovative interactive design in this modern twist on Prokofiev's Peter and the Wolf. The setting is modern-day Los Angeles, and the narrator Alice Cooper. Like a box of candy, each page contains something interesting or beautiful.

SpaceFlix by Marbles the Brain Store. This is a well-designed, easy to use app paired with some low tech modeling clay and some space themed stickers. Download the animation app on your smart phone, and you have a nice introduction to digital storytelling.

2016 JURORS

This year's 14 jurors sets the KAPi awards apart from other award programs. Any juror can nominate a product (it doesn't need to be entered to win), and there are no hidden fees or hooks. Jurors agree to disclose in advance any conflicts of interest during the judging calls.

Warren Buckleitner,
Children's
Technology Review
Chris Byrne, TTPM
Barbara Chamberlin,
New Mexico State
University
Claire Green, Parents'
Choice Foundation
David Kleeman, Dubit
Rebecca Levey,
KidzVuz.com
Frank Migliorelli,
New York Public
Library
Yohei Nakajima,
Techstars
Dan Nessel,
DadDoes.com
Robin Raskin, Living
in Digital Times
Reyne Rice,
ToyTrends
Mark Schlichting,
Noodleworks
Tonda Bunge Sellers,
Digital Kids Media
Scott Traylor, 360KID