



Children's
TECHNOLOGY
REVIEW EXCHANGE

Our amazing
LittleClickers
topic this
month...



August 2018

What's hot this summer at
Mediatech....

VR in the Library

On the cover: **I Expect You to Die** by Schell Games

Children's Technology Review **August 2018**

Volume 26, No. 8 Issue 222

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Han Solo Figure
Star Wars Ultimate Co-Pilot
Chewie
Wonders Literacy Program



* Denotes "Editor's Choice."

"Roll down the window -- quickly -- **listen to me.** There's toxic gas so you have to be quick. Hurry. **Yes!** You're good." Two teens working on a VR puzzle in our library.



I like to think of a library as a time portal. Ours is a classic brick and mortar building on Main Street, but its full of magic on the inside. Any seasoned librarian or teacher knows that when the right book or game meets a curious mind, it can spark them into another time or place. This basic idea has shaped the design of Mediatech (our tech center located in the second floor of our library) and it has been working effectively this summer. Every day, dozens of children watch videos or talk to friends as they use our iPads, huge wall-mounted screens, laptops, a 3D printer, a flight simulator and most recently a PlayStation VR headset, running "I Expect You to Die," reviewed in this issue, and pictured on this month's cover. You can watch a group of children collaborating to solve one of the puzzles, at <https://youtu.be/53KU70xO-SE> and you can see how this type of "material" helps our library sparkle. We choose games that are social, and pull in a wide variety of people. Our PlayStation VR works because everyone can see what the player sees. We also prep the center so that novices experience instant success, by having screens cued up before the center opens. Here are some other things Mediatech has taught us this summer?

- Scratch (www.scratch.mit.edu) is more popular than ever, thanks to our morning "Coding Camps." Groups of children stay into the afternoon, working informally together to polish projects. Scratch works well on our \$220 Asus Chromebooks.
- Super Smash Bros. is a constant favorite. Make sure you keep a lot of controllers charged, so that up to eight can play at once.
- Fortnite is hot this summer. Mediatech gives children multiple platforms, so they can play together to share tips and tricks. While one child plays on the big screen (on the PS4) others gather to watch, or play along on tablets.
- Our trusty flight simulator keeps chugging along. It's fun to see children learning to fly realistic airplanes

LITTLECLICKERS: Caves

The recent cave rescue of a soccer team in Thailand has created an increased interest in caves. How much do you know about these dark holes in the ground? See page 3, or visit www.littleclickers.com/caves



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Dust or Magic

Save the date!
www.dustormagic.com

Nov 4-6, 2018 • Institute The 18th Annual fall institute will once again take place at the Inn at Lambertville Station. \$1480/seat.

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Caves

5 (or so) sites & 10 videos

Read this column online, with links, at www.littleclickers.com/caves

Did you hear about the soccer team that was lost in a cave? Luckily they were all rescued. How did they get in such a situation? What was it like inside the cave? How are caves formed? Let's learn more about caves.

1. Where did the soccer team get lost? Answer: Thailand, in a cave called Tham Luang. It is home to monkeys, statues and huge chambers that are lit by beams of sunlight. But if you go in deeper, the cave gets dark and narrow, and you can get trapped if the water rises. Learn more about this cave, at <http://bitly.com/2n1vsjm> or take a virtual tour, at <https://youtu.be/v4jputXZXXY>.



2. Where is the world's biggest cave? Answer: A 747 could fly into the mouth of the Doong Cave in Vietnam <http://bitly.com/2mYNqTA>. But the longest cave is in the USA. It's called Mammoth Cave in Kentucky, which has over 400 miles of tunnels. It's been called a grand, gloomy, peculiar place. Learn more at <https://www.nps.gov/macaca/index.htm>

3. How are caves made? One drip at a time. Caves are made by running water, and they take tens of thousands of years to form. Learn more at PBS <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/caves/>

4. What's the difference between a stalactite and a stalagmite? Each is formed when dissolved minerals drip in a cave. Stalactites hang from the ceiling (like icicles); stalagmites form on the floor. Here's some news of a recent discovery of some amazing formations <https://youtu.be/y2rMlyhhvDs>

5. How is a cave like a time machine? Caves are nature's vaults. If you put a mark on a wall, it could last for thousands of years, because it is protected from wind and rain. In fact, there are drawings that date back 64,000 years! Here's a link that shows some good cave drawings <http://bitly.com/2n4Nz88>.

APPLICATION: MAKE A STALACTITE
Get some salt, some water and some string.
<http://bitly.com/2AxjQhC> or try this experiment in a just a few days <http://bitly.com/2ADgMQW>

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Above: Inside the Doong Cave in Vietnam.
Below: In a cave in France, explorers found the sketch of a bear dates back almost 36,000 years <http://archeologie.culture.fr/chauvet/en>



Caves on YouTube

Want more? Here's a video playlist that go along with this column:
<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLcBVHzUUEKwIkXue2BbWfsV2CJOtybH4K>





Feature Reviews and New Releases

AUGUST 2018

Here's an alphabetical listing of both the feature reviews (with ratings) and the new and future releases. "Entry Date" refers to the date we first learned of the product.

Acer Chromebook Tab 10


This is a well designed Chrome OS-based ten inch tablet targeting the education market. Think touch screen Chromebook without the keyboard, and you get the idea. Just don't forget the stylus. This product is sold to education customers via commercial channels. As a result the price can vary.

The tablet is designed to make school IT administrators who have the Chrome Education license smile. Why? The tablet supports multiple user sign-in, access to info, apps, projects, and automatic updates. A small Wacom EMR stylus slides into the back case. Access to Google Play makes it possible to download and install Android apps. The weight is 1.21 pounds. The tablet is 0.39 inches thick.

Details: Acer of America, www.acer.com. Price: \$330. Ages: 6-up. Platform: . Teaches/Purpose: A chrome-based tablet with a stylus. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.8 stars. Entry date: 7/24/2018. []



Evaluated using the		Tablet
Ease of Use	9	90 %
Sound Quality	9	



Camp Pokémon

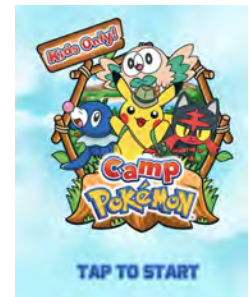
This is a free download with commercial content including external links to Pokémon commercials and additional Pokémon experiences. The menu is well designed, making the app easy to use, and the games are fun with some reading and logic opportunities.

The app was being featured this week (July 2018) by Apple, so we tested the iPad version. We discovered a beautiful, easy to use experience that tracks progress. You start with a view of an island that you rotate with a swipe, and then can zoom into one of the Pokémon activities or commercials. We found three commercial areas of the island that are freely mixed with the less commercial tutorials -- a card scanner with links to a store, a movie viewer with Pokémon commercials and a "news" station with more ads. The games follow tried and true formats -- there are multiple-choice style quizzes, memory games and more.

Content comes from Pokémon Sun and Pokémon Moon. The Pokémon TCG (Trading Card Game) Match activity tests your knowledge of Pokémon TCG cards. As you play, you can earn energy symbol pins. Other games teach the basics of Pokémon, such as Poké Ball Throw or the Battle Matchups quiz. There are both day and night modes, and the Poké Ball Roll activity lets you guide Poké Balls through a fancy maze filled with obstacles.

The perky camp counselors offer hints, and introduce new games. Note that access to the camera, storage, and phone functionality is required to use the Camp Pokémon app.

Details: Pokemon USA, www.pokemon.com. Price: \$free. Ages: 6-8. Platform: iPad, Android. Teaches/Purpose: Pokémon, logic, memory, matching. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.1 stars. Entry date: 7/17/2018. []



Ease of Use	8	82 %
Educational	7	
Entertaining	9	
Design Features	9	
Good Value	8	



Gululu Go

Can you turn drinking from a water bottle into a game? Gululu Go is one attempt. The water bottle/app/charger is designed to track how much you drink, although our tester (age 12) found it "complicated to setup and use" and, despite a lot of trying "wasn't impressed." The built in software links drinking with care for a virtual pet. The more you drink, the more coins you earn and the more your pet grows. As children drink more water from their bottle, their chosen virtual pet grows and makes friends. At the same time, the bottle's app link parents informed of their children's hydration progress through a connected smartphone app.

A built in speaker allows the Gululu pets to talk to children, with 200 phrases. Children can redeem accessories for their pets with the virtual coins collected along their journey of discovering the Gululu Universe. Testers make the following observations:

- In general, the set up and interface of the bottle and the app — and the communication between the two — is too complicated for kids to understand.
- It's a proprietary connection cable that would make the bottle useless if you lose it.
- The touch sensors on the bottle don't always work.
- Many features don't work without WiFi, which would make it less useful at school, outside or other places away from home.
- The quietest volume setting is still too loud for places like school.
- Kids would have to use parent's phone to watch how-to videos and find necessary information on the app. They would also need to be able to read.
- The bottle screen interface (icons and navigation) are unclear.

Parents asked: "How washable is it considering all the electronics inside?" and "does it know if there's actually water in it? Can you cheat by just turning over an empty bottle?"

Invented by Bowhead Technology. Learn more at www.gululu.com.

Details: Bowhead Technology, Inc., . Price: \$120. Ages: 3-7. Platform: iPad, iPhone, Android. Teaches/Purpose: health, hydration. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 2.8 stars. Entry date: 7/16/2018. []

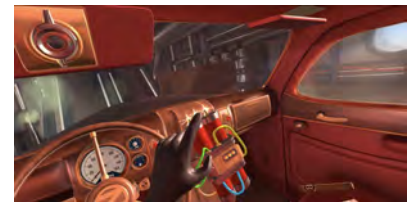


Ease of Use	5	55 %
Educational	N	
Entertaining	6	
Design Features	6	
Good Value	5	

I Expect You to Die

After you put on your VR headset and pick up your hand controllers (both required), you find yourself in a problem solving situation -- where every second counts. The game is fun, safe virtual reality puzzle that requires a lot of problem solving and higher order thinking; mixed in with fine and gross motor manipulation. You are rewarded for attention to detail, thinking outside the box and remembering sequences. As of July 2018, content includes five simulations: Friendly Skies (figure out how to start a car and drive it out of of an airplane); Squeaky Clean (work as a window washer to save the city from poisonous gas); Deep Dive (use scuba gear to get to the surface); Winter Break (evade booby traps and disable an anti-gravity machine); and First Class (survive an attack on a classy train). Each mission is timed, so it's fun to race against yourself. We tested the PlayStation VR system extensively in our library and found it to be a good social game. It was first released in December of 2016. Designed for Oculus Rift, Playstation VR, HTC Vive and Windows Mixed Reality.

Details: Schell Games, <http://schellgames.com>. Price: \$25. Ages: 8-up. Platform: Steam, PlayStation 4, Vive, PSVR, Oculus Rift, Windows VR. Teaches/Purpose: language, problem solving, logic, following directions, socialization. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.9 stars. Entry date: 7/30/2018. []



Ease of Use	9	98 %
Educational	10	
Entertaining	10	
Design Features	10	
Good Value	10	





Khan Academy Kids

Free, easy-to-use, comprehensive and able to track multiple children; this complete curriculum contains approximately 775 (as of July 2018) leveled early reading, math and logic activities; including videos and ebooks; plus a drawing/coloring space. More activities are planned.

It's easy to make individual profiles for each child/hundreds of individualized, leveled early reading and math activities, as it tracks a child's progress. The games are just challenging enough to keep children engaged. The only cost? Your time and a few emails to set up the first child's account so the app can confirm your identity.

After you create a profile for your child, the app serves up activities, books, videos, and lessons. As they finish content, they earn virtual bugs, hats, and toys.

This app smells a lot like school, which is both a strength and a weakness. It was designed to multiple subjects and is carefully aligned to the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework for preschool-aged children and Common Core State Standards for kindergarten-aged children.


It is designed to adapt over the years as a child grows, and includes a social-emotional learning.

Content contributors include educators from the Stanford, book authors, and Super Simple Songs (from Skyship Entertainment), Bellwether Media and National Geographic Young Explorer Magazine. Parents are encouraged to read along in books, and can view their child's progress on activities in the Library and set up accounts for multiple children, all at no cost. Learn more and access the latest download links at www.khanacademy.org/kids

Details: Khan Academy, www.khanacademy.org. Price: \$free. Ages: 2-5. Platform: iPad, iPhone. Teaches/Purpose: early math, early reading, geography, letters, alphabet. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 5 stars. Entry date: 7/14/2018. []



Ease of Use	10	100 %
Educational	10	
Entertaining	10	
Design Features	10	
Good Value	10	



LEGO Harry Potter Hogwarts Great Hall

This specialized Harry Potter themed LEGO set lets you assemble a 14 inch tall Great Hall at Hogwarts. There's a working fireplace, benches, tables and reversible house banners, plus the Grand Staircase tower with an unfolding spiral staircase. Includes figures for Harry Potter, Ron Weasley, Hermione Granger, Draco Malfoy, Susan Bones, Professor McGonagall, Professor Quirrell with dual Lord Voldemort face, Hagrid, Albus Dumbledore and Nearly Headless Nick, plus buildable Basilisk and Fawkes™ creatures, and Hedwig™ and Scabbers figures.

The Great Hall features tables, head table with seats, fireplace, two reversible house banners and four 'floating' candles, food (turkey leg, ice cream and a small cake), brooms, trophy cup and a teapot. The kit combines with other Hogwarts kits.

Details: LEGO Americas, www.lego.com. Price: \$100. Ages: 7-up. Platform: Smart Toy. Teaches/Purpose: spatial relations, LEGO, Harry Potter. Entry date: 7/24/2018.





Mario Tennis Aces


Designed exclusively for the Nintendo Switch, this is a 1 to 4 player game of virtual tennis with a lot of depth, including both online tournament and adventure modes. We found it easy to pick up and play, either using the traditional controllers or via actual hand motions, called "swing mode."

Content includes a cast of 15 characters, including Mario, Wario and Waluigi. Each character has different moves and serves. Features include a good leveling system, that allows a novice to jump right in. But expert players will still find challenges, via trick shots and power moves.

Details: Nintendo of America, www.nintendo.com. Price: \$60. Ages: 7-up. Platform: Nintendo Switch. Teaches/Purpose: sports, tennis, fine motor coordination, gross motor coordination. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.7 stars. Entry date: 7/11/2018. []



Ease of Use	9	94 %
Educational	9	
Entertaining	10	
Design Features	10	
Good Value	9	



Star Wars Force Link 2.0 Kessel Run Millennium Falcon

When does a tech toy disrupt pretend play? This Star Wars themed spaceship is a prime candidate. It delivers sounds and haptics (vibrations and events) in response to motions. There's a timed element that can happen during a "battle" that results in several of the doors popping off. The ship is designed work with an app and other "Wear Force Link 2.0" wearable technology to activate effects. The kit includes the vehicle, a figure and two accessories. Powered by three 3 AA batteries. The app can activate figure sounds. Includes 3.75-inch Han Solo figure.

Details: Hasbro, Inc., www.hasbro.com. Price: \$99. Ages: 6-up. Platform: Smart Toy. Teaches/Purpose: Star Wars. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 3.3 stars. Entry date: 7/24/2018. []



Evaluated using the		Watch Me To
Ease of Use	8	68.75 %
Design Features	7	
Value	6	
Durability	8	
Longevity	6	
Realism	7	
Sound Quality	7	
Narration Quality	6	



Star Wars Ultimate Co-Pilot Chewie

Designed by the robotics team at Furreal Pets, this 16 inch figure responds to motion and touch with 100 sound and motion combinations. Make a noise and Chewie responds with a roar. Features include poseable legs and different facial expressions. His outfit includes a bandolier and satchel. Powered by 4 AA batteries. Release date: Fall 2018

Details: Hasbro, Inc., www.hasbro.com. Price: \$130. Ages: 3-12. Platform: Smart Toy. Teaches/Purpose: Star Wars. Entry date: 7/11/2018.



Wonders Literacy Program

Designed for pre-kindergarten (PreK) and elementary school classrooms, this subscription-based program contains social emotional lessons plus literacy lessons for PreK and elementary students. The core curriculum is bilingual, in English and Spanish.

The big news (8/1/2018) is that Sesame Street characters are now part of the take home curriculum. They feature Cookie Monster, Elmo, Big Bird and others. Teacher's resources include weekly parent newsletters that are translated into ten languages to extend learning into the home with videos and activities for families to use together.

Available now for reviews and adoptions nationwide, the K-Grade 5 curricula will start appearing in classrooms in the 2019-2020 school year. The PreK curriculum is currently under development. More information can be found at www.mhereadingwonders.com.

Details: The McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc., www.mmhschool.com. Price: \$call. Ages: 5-10. Platform: Windows, Mac OSX, Chrome, Internet Site. Teaches/Purpose: reading, social emotional. Entry date: 7/20/2018.

