Decoding Technology

Discussion Forums, Chats, and Webcasts

by Tim Walker and Chip Donohue

These tech tools enable early childhood professionals to connect with each other in new ways. When we use these tools effectively it really is "a small world after all."

Tech Terms

■ **Synchronous:** To take place at the same time — chats and Webcasts require users to be online at the same time.

■ **Asynchronous:** To take place separately — discussion forums allow for anytime, anywhere access and participation.

■ **Discussion Forum:** An asynchronous tool that organizes and groups comments into threads that contain a main posting and all related replies, to encourage participation and interaction over a period of time.

■ **Chat:** A synchronous tool that allows real-time interaction, such as having guest speakers or subject matter experts take questions, or enabling small groups to work together.

■ **Webcast:** A method for broadcasting audio and video over the Internet using streaming video, slides, graphics, and captions with two-way interactivity through a chat and e-mail. Can be archived for later access.

Tech Tools

At your fingertips are powerful tools for sharing ideas, exchanging information, gathering resources, discussing current issues, and having access to experts without the limitations of time and distance. Our ability to collaborate, network, and advocate is enhanced, and the availability and quality of online training and courses is improved, when we use these tools to create a meaningful and rich learning community of early childhood professionals.

Tech Tips

The effective use of these tools requires an understanding of proper "Netiquette," or a common set of rules and guidelines for behavior in an online discussion, chat, or when sending e-mail.

■ *The Core Rules of Netiquette*
by Virginia Shea
www.albion.com/netiquette/index.html

■ *The Net: User Guidelines and Netiquette*
by Arlene Rinaldi
www.fau.edu/netiquette/net/netiquette.html

■ The Computer Ethics Institute's
Ten Commandments of Computer Ethics
www.brook.edu/dybdocroot/its/cei/overview/Ten_Commandments_ofComputer_Ethics.htm

■ *Time Out!* Discussion Forums, Center for Early Childhood Leadership
www.nl.edu/cecl

Tech Links

■ A. L. Mailman Family Foundation (Discussions)
http://mailman.org/index.htm

■ Center for Early Childhood Leadership, National-Louis University (*Time Out!* Discussions)
www.nl.edu/cecl

■ Child Care Parent Provider Information Network (Discussions)
www.ccppin.com/

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■ Connect for Kids
   (*Talktime* Live online discussion series)
   www.connectforkids.org/

■ Early Childhood and Parenting
   Collaborative
   (Chats & Web Talks)
   http://ecap.crc.uiuc.edu/

■ Early Childhood Focus
   (News Topics with comments)
   www.earlychildhoodfocus.org/

■ The Future of Children
   (Online Conversations)
   www.futureofchildren.org/index.htm

■ Illinois Early Learning Project
   (Live Chats & Discussions)
   http://illinoisearlylearning.org/

■ QUILT, Quality in Linking Together
   Early Childhood Partnerships
   (Discussions)
   www.quilt.org/Home/home.html

■ US Department of Education
   (My.ED.Gov Webcasts)
   http://www.ed.gov/index.jhtml

■ Young Children International
   (Discussions)
   www.naeyc.org/yci/default.asp

If you know of other discussions, chats,
and Webcasts for early childhood pro-
fessionals, please e-mail Chip Donohue
at cdonohue@uwm.edu.

Source

*Microsoft® Office XP: A Training Manual
for Early Childhood Administrators* by Tim
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National-Louis University.
www.nl.edu/cecl

Coming in
May 2004:
Decoding Technology:
Customer Service Tools