



Press Contacts:

Alison Grand, Grand Communications for WNET, 212.584.1133, alison@grandcommunications.com

Gabrielle Torello, Grand Communications for WNET, 917.312.2832, gab@grandcommunications.com

Press materials: thirteen.org/pressroom or <http://pressroom.pbs.org/PBS-Kids/CYBERCHASE>

Cyberchase: Mobile Adventures in STEM **Uses the Power of Mobile Media to Engage Families** **in Learning Together**

Bilingual pilot program funded by National Science Foundation uses text messages to deliver fun, environmental science and math activities for kids and parents based on Emmy Award-winning PBS KIDS series

Research shows the initiative's positive impact for low-income families, including Spanish speakers

A new study suggests that smartphones are a promising tool for supporting families in learning about math and the environment. ***Cyberchase: Mobile Adventures in STEM*** is a new pilot program aimed at advancing STEM learning in 6-8-year-olds by helping parents from underserved communities, including low-income families and Spanish speakers, engage with their children in fun, hands-on environmental science and math activities. Research shows that children from low-income families, including many Spanish-speaking families, are underrepresented in STEM coursework and careers. There is an ongoing need to provide early exposure and help these families and others engage in STEM learning at home.

Funded by the National Science Foundation, the six-week ***Cyberchase: Mobile Adventures in STEM*** program, created by WNET and Education Development Center, combines the impact of ***Cyberchase***, the Emmy-winning PBS KIDS STEM series, with the potential of mobile texting to effectively deliver engaging, informal math and science-based lessons. A pilot study shows the campaign was successful in encouraging families to spend time learning together while boosting their knowledge about caring for the environment.

More than 500 families across four U.S. cities – Houston, San Antonio, Tampa and the New York City metropolitan area – took part in the innovative bilingual program, and 95 families participated in the pilot research study. Participating parents received weekly text messages with environmentally-themed *Cyberchase* videos and a choice of two activities to do with their children, focused on related themes such as recycling, energy and saving water. For example, after watching a *Cyberchase* clip on habitats, families took a habitat walk to observe animals outdoors and built a bird feeder at home.

Key research findings include:

- **The texting model was successful.** Simple hands-on STEM activities and *Cyberchase* media, delivered via text, allowed parents to integrate educational moments into their families' daily lives. Parents said the weekly activities gave them what they needed to work constructively with their kids.
- **Families found topics related to environmental conservation important, relevant and actionable.** Families found activities such as water-saving, where they measured the amount of water they wasted by running the faucet while brushing their teeth, easy to implement and educational. During another week, families conducted a household trash audit, counting how many items they can save by recycling every day.
- ***Cyberchase* video clips engaged children and helped families complete the activities.** Parents indicated that the *Cyberchase* video clips introduced the week's main theme and gave them ideas for how to do each activity. *Cyberchase* characters captured their children's attention and made them more attuned to messages about caring for the environment. Children were excited to be part of a virtual CyberSquad, mirroring what the characters were doing.
- **Families developed conservation knowledge, dispositions and practices as they completed activities.** Parents in the study reported statistically significant positive gains in their family's knowledge of how to care for the environment (.33 point increase on a scale of 1 to 7), as well as greater frequency of behaviors like conserving water and recycling (.20 point increase on a scale of 1 to 4). They also said they engaged in more activities like visiting museums, asking and answering questions about science or the environment, and discussing animals and plants they saw in their local environments.

The parents included in the study were mostly Latino (72%) and low-income (76%). All participants completed pre- and post-surveys. Researchers also interviewed 17 of the parents to learn more about their experiences with receiving family learning activities, watching videos and completing activities. Participation data was collected using backend data from the platform used to send parents activities and media via text message. Forty-eight percent of families participating in the study clicked on at least half of the weekly links sent to them (three or more of the six links to activities and videos). The study suggests that parents can use brief informal STEM activities to share meaningful learning interactions with

their families, gain new perspectives about their children and explore new parenting roles for themselves.

Parents can sign up for the *Cyberchase: Mobile Adventures in STEM* six-week program by texting “eco” to 30644.

Cyberchase is America’s longest running math series that has engaged millions of children ages 6-8 in the fun and challenge of math for more than 15 years. The animated series tells the story of three diverse kids – two girls and a boy – who are summoned into cyberspace to foil the dastardly Hacker. Each episode sends the team on an adventure driven by a STEM concept and the CyberSquad must work together to apply the math that saves the day. Featuring diverse role models who approach math with persistence and confidence, *Cyberchase* proves that math is everywhere and everyone can use it. Multiple studies prove that *Cyberchase* improves children’s knowledge, skills and enthusiasm for math and problem-solving.

Cyberchase is produced by THIRTEEN Productions LLC for WNET. Sandra Sheppard, THIRTEEN’s Director of Kids’ and Educational Media, is Executive Producer. Melinda Toporoff is Series Producer.

Funding for *Cyberchase: Mobile Adventures in STEM* provided by the National Science Foundation through grant #1713444. Series funding for *Cyberchase* is provided by The JPB Foundation and Ernst & Young LLP. Additional funding is provided by the Tiger Baron Foundation, The V & L Marx Foundation in Memory of Virginia and Leonard Marx, Lynne and Marc Benioff, and Epstein Teicher Philanthropies.

Websites: pbskids.org/cyberchase, <http://facebook.com/cyberchase>, [@Cyberchase](https://twitter.com/Cyberchase)

About EDC

Education Development Center (EDC) is a global nonprofit that designs, implements, and evaluates programs to improve education, health, and economic opportunity worldwide, with a focus on vulnerable and underserved populations. Since 1982, its New York City-based Center for Children and Technology (CCT) has been a national leader in the study and design of digital media that improve teaching and learning in and out of schools.

About WNET

WNET is America’s flagship PBS station: parent company of New York’s [THIRTEEN](http://www.thirteen.org) and [WLIW21](http://www.wliw.com) and operator of [NJTV](http://www.njtv.com), the statewide public media network in New Jersey. Through its new [ALL ARTS](http://www.allarts.org) multi-platform initiative, its broadcast channels, three cable services (THIRTEEN PBSKids, Create and World) and online streaming sites, WNET brings quality arts, education and public affairs programming to more than five million viewers each month. WNET produces and presents a wide range of acclaimed PBS series, including *Nature*, *Great Performances*, *American Masters*, *PBS NewsHour Weekend*, and the nightly interview program *Amanpour and Company*. In addition, WNET produces numerous documentaries, children’s programs, and local news and cultural offerings, as well as multi-platform initiatives addressing poverty and climate. Through THIRTEEN Passport and WLIW Passport, station members can stream new and archival THIRTEEN, WLIW and PBS programming anytime, anywhere.

About PBS KIDS

PBS KIDS, the number one educational media brand for kids, offers children ages 2-8 the opportunity to explore new ideas and new worlds through television, digital media and community-based programs. PBS KIDS and local stations across the country support the entire ecosystem in which children learn, including their teachers, parents and community. Provided by stations, the free PBS KIDS 24/7 channel and live stream is available to more than 95% of U.S. TV households. Kidscreen- and Webby Award-winning pbskids.org provides engaging interactive content, including digital games and streaming video. PBS KIDS offers mobile apps to help

support young children's learning, including the PBS KIDS Video app, which is available on a variety of mobile devices and on platforms such as Roku, Apple TV, Amazon Fire TV, Android TV, Samsung TV and Chromecast. PBS KIDS also offers parent and teacher resources to support children's learning anytime and anywhere. For more information on PBS KIDS content and initiatives supporting school readiness and more, visit pbs.org/pressroom, or follow PBS KIDS on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#).