Children's Early STEM Learning: Lessons from Media Characters

Characters in children’s media drive a child’s interest to the content that the characters transmit. Children often develop close, emotional one-way relationships (parasocial relationships) with specific characters. Just as children can learn more from their favorite teachers, so too can they learn more from their favorite media characters. Calvert will describe the ways that children’s parasocial relationships with media characters can improve their learning of STEM concepts with particular focus on mathematics. Calvert will also demonstrate a new prototype of an Intelligent Character: Dora from *Dora the Explorer*. The Dora prototype uses a game to teach preschool-aged children the add-one concept. Calvert and her team are currently using a Wizard of Oz paradigm, where an experimenter is concealed behind a curtain to provide contingent replies to children’s responses. She will also consider implications for children’s learning from intelligent, personalized, interactive media characters in the 21st century and the role of teachers and parents in this process. Attendees may read the following optional article: S.L. Calvert et al., *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology* 35 (2014) 148–155.