NEW YORK HALL OF SCIENCE RELEASES PICTURE DOTS,
AN EARLY CHILDHOOD APP

The Digital Storytelling App Connects Young Learners to Early Literacy,
Math and Science Skills

Now Available in the App Store

Queens, NY – The New York Hall of Science (NYSCI) has created Picture Dots, its first early childhood app. The digital learning tool encourages conversations and interactions between young learners and their parents, caregivers or educators in ways that connect to early literacy, math and science skills. Picture Dots is the latest addition to NYSCI's *Noticing Tools*™ suite of educational apps. Picture Dots is designed for iPhones and iPads, and, like all of the *Noticing Tools*™ apps, is available for free in the App Store.

Picture Dots exemplifies NYSCI's Design, Make, Play approach to learning, which encourages open-ended exploration, imaginative learning, personal relevance, deep engagement and delight. To guide caregivers in using the app, NYSCI developed three interactive storybooks for caregivers and an educator guide. These storybooks suggest ways that caregivers and educators can spark conversations with their youngsters about what they notice and observe in the world around them. The educator guide provides ideas and activity suggestions for integrating the app into family workshops.

"Picture Dots allows children to be in charge of the storytelling and creation process," says Harouna Ba, director of the Sara Lee Schupf Family Center for Play, Science and Technology Learning at NYSCI. "The app and accompanying storybook guides encourage children and their caregivers to work together to notice, observe and play. It is this emphasis on the child – what they observe, what they want their story to say, how they want to categorize the elements in their digital creation – that makes this app so powerful. Because the child decides what happens in their digital narrative, they become more enthusiastic about their story, which leads to more creativity, engagement and co-learning between the child and their caregiver."

Working with their caregivers, children ages 3 – 8 can use Picture Dots to take photos, drag colored dots onto the photos, and then assign each dot a word, phrase, musical note, sound or record short sentences. When the child presses play, they can hear their story played back. The dots can also be used for color matching, counting objects, categorizing items, making patterns, and other uses. Creations and stories made in the app can be saved and emailed to others.

Picture Dots was developed in collaboration with Marino Software. Creative Design Consultant Stephen Lewis created and designed the initial app prototypes. NYSCI worked with the Children's Discovery

Museum of San Jose to inform the redevelopment of the Picture Dots app and the initial development of the Picture Dots storybook guides.

Picture Dots is generously supported by NYSCI's Sara Lee Schupf Family Center for Play, Science, and Technology (SciPlay) and the Heising-Simons Foundation.

Picture Dots is available in the App Store for free. The Picture Dots storybooks are available for free download on noticing.nysci.org/apps/picture-dots.

The New York Hall of Science (NYSCI) – The mission of the New York Hall of Science (NYSCI) is to nurture generations of passionate learners, critical thinkers and active citizens through an approach called Design, Make, Play. Design, Make, Play emphasizes open-ended exploration, imaginative learning and personal relevance, resulting in deep engagement and delight in science, technology, engineering and mathematics. NYSCI was founded at the 1964-65 World's Fair and has evolved into New York's center for interactive science serving a half million students, teachers and families each year. For more information, visit nysci.org or call 718-699-0005. Follow NYSCI on Twitter and Instagram: @nysci, and on Facebook at: facebook.com/nysci.

Media Contact:
Mary Record, New York Hall of Science
718-595-9123; mrecord@nysci.org

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