

· CHILD'S PLAY ·



A PUBLICATION OF THE USA TOY LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

Fall 2009

USA-TLA: Promoting Development Through Toys and Play

Vol. XXIII, No.3

Research Scholars Shout Out, "Keep Playing!"

Play is in the air! And under our feet and in our hands and heads. Its value from birth through adulthood is the subject of new books, websites and national news stories written by highly regarded scholars like Stuart Brown, Barbara Brannen, Vivian Paley. The tone of their research will have a familiar ring to toy librarians, teachers and parents.

Here are some more recent findings from **Stuart Brown**, who is trained in medicine, psychiatry and clinical research, in his book *Play*. He quantifies seven properties of play, namely, play:

- Is apparently purposeless (done for its own sake) – has no survival value
- Is voluntary
- Has inherent attraction – it's fun and makes you feel good
- Offers freedom from time
- Provides diminished consciousness of self (in imaginative play, we can be a different self)
- Carries improvisational potential – it is not rigid
- Creates a continuation desire – we desire to keep doing it

Brown first discovered play's importance by discerning its absence in a studied group of homicidal young males. As clinical director and chief of psychiatry at Mercy Hospital and a professor at University of California, San Diego, he interviewed thousands of people to capture their play profiles identifying negative consequences in a play-deprived life. After his clinical career, he became the founder of *The National Institute for Play*.

Scholar Scott Eberle, Brown's colleague and vice-president of interpretation at the Strong National Museum of Play in Rochester, N.Y., gives another interpretation to play, describing a six-step process that happens while we and our children play: *Anticipation, Surprise* – the unexpected or a discovery — which gives *Pleasure, Understanding, Strength* and *Poise*, and the cycle repeats.

For humans, creating situations of life may be play's most valuable benefit. In play we can imagine and experience situations we have never encountered before and learn from them. We can create possibilities that have never existed.

Most obviously play is intensely pleasurable. It energizes us and enlivens us. It eases our burdens. It renews our natural sense of optimism and opens us up to new possibilities.

All Animals Do It for Health, Well-Being

Bob Fagan, another foremost scientist on animal play who meticulously compiled the world's knowledge of animal play from aardvarks to Zonotrichia (sparrows), found that Alaska grizzly bears that played the most were the ones who survived best. This is true despite the fact that playing takes away time, attention and energy from activities like eating, which seem at first glance to contribute more to the bears' survival. What Fagan found is that cats deprived of play-fighting can hunt, but what they never learn to do is to socialize successfully. Instead they will be overly aggressive or retreat from social contact.

"Play teaches young animals to make sound judgments," said Fagan. "Play allows 'pretend' rehearsal for the challenges and ambiguities of life, a rehearsal in which life and death are not at stake."

The master in the art of living makes little distinction between his work and his play, his labor and his leisure, his mind and his body, his information and his recreation, his love and his religion. He hardly knows which is which. He simply pursues his vision of excellence at whatever he does, leaving others to decide whether he is working or playing. To him, he's always doing both.

— James Michener, from his autobiography

This is just the beginning of the story. Neuroscientists, developmental biologists, psychologists, social scientists and researchers from every point of the scientific compass now know that play is a profound biological process. It has evolved over eons in many animal species to promote survival. It shapes the brain and makes animals smarter and more adaptable. In higher animals it fosters empathy and makes possible complex social groups. For us, play lies at

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Research, Scholars Shout Out, "Keep Playing!"

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the core of creativity and innovation.

Of all animal species, humans are the biggest players of all. We are built to play and built through play. When we play we are engaged in the purest expression of our humanity, the truest expression of our individuality. Is it any wonder that often the times we feel most alive are moments of play?

Nearly every one of us starts out playing quite naturally. As children we don't need instruction in how to play. We just find what we enjoy and do it. Whatever "rules" there are to play, we learn from our play-mates. And from our play we learn how the world works, and how friends interact. By playing, we learn about the mystery and excitement that the world can hold in a tree house, an old tire swing or a box of crayons.

National Institute for Play Looks to Impact Education

The National Institute for Play – www.nifplay.org — wants play to be more central to our lives and the education of our children. It's main tenet is as follows:

The Institute believes that as play is woven into the fabric of social practices, we will dramatically transform our personal health, our relationships, the education we provide our children and the capacity of our corporations to innovate.

The education NIFP espouses is based on play because play is a catalyst for learning at any age.

"The science of play is validating what gifted educators such as Alice Meckley, Ph.D., Vivian Paley, Sharna Olfman and Kathy Hirsch-Pasek have long been practicing and advocating. When students have fun at learning, they continue to pursue it for its own sake. It is how nature assured us how to learn about the world and our places in it.

"At any age, play acts to retain and enhance meaningful context, and optimizes the learning process. All gifted parents, master teachers, and wise executives know this.

"Long-term studies under way indicate that play-based learning with playful teachers heightens overall long term performance.

"With the help of our Council of Advisors, we expect to design and offer educators and parents a series of play-based curricular alternatives.

"We plan to help develop a flexible educational policy that could improve educational performance and sustain motivation for lifelong learning.

"And for teachers-in-training, we plan on approaching selected front-line schools of education to introduce the basics of play and its contributions to the learning process. No teacher need be left behind.

"A transformation in education is possible. If we apply the understanding from the science of play - and provide our teachers the tools - the students will respond; they are primed for learning through play."

*Excerpted from the National Institute for Play and **Play: How It Shapes the Brain, Opens the Imagination and Invigorates the Soul**, by Stuart Brown, M.D. with Christopher Vaughan.*



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Articles, suggestions and letters are welcome.

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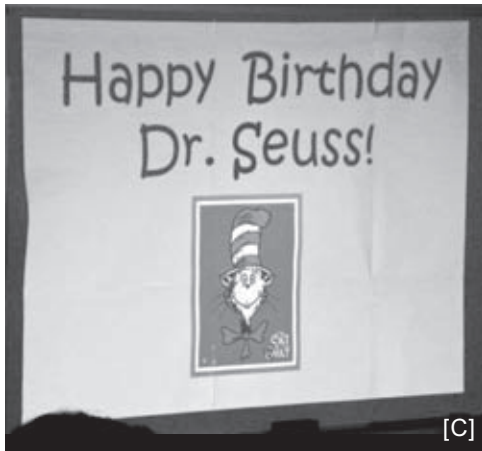
2009 Spring Conference



[A]



[B]



[C]



[D]

[A] TLA Director and Director of the Turrell Childcare and Early Learning Center, Sandy Richards, reflects on the conference success and educational quality.

[B] Conference attendees enjoy playing with art design.

[C] Kids recognized the birthday of Dr. Seuss with a poster featuring Cat in the Hat.

[D] TLA Director Nina Hillery gives keynote address on "Learning, What's Play Got to Do with It?"

[E] Lifelike baby doll rides in her carriage in the Elaine Adler Toy Library at the Turrell Center, named to honor its benefactor and USA-TLA President Elaine Adler.



[E]

Paramus Conference 2009 Great Play Day

USA-TLA and the Turrell Child Care and Early Learning Center in Paramus, N.J., co-hosted a valuable play-charged conference on April 25, 2009, before a captive audience of childcare workers, teachers and toy librarians. Thumbs up! was the response from the attendees, who gave generous and positive evaluations to the speakers, presentations and delivery of conference services by Sandy Richards, TLA Director and Director of the Turrell Center, and her staff.

Special shout-outs to TLA Director Nina Hillery, who led back-to-back discussions and keynoted, and Director Martin Stone, who offered insightful remarks on autism and children.

Look for news about next spring conference – 2010 – at www.usatla.org.

Movie Making for Tomorrow's Director

APTE releases its newest program, Kids Video Workshop

APTE has announced the launch of its newest product, Kids Video Workshop (KVV), video-making software and a teacher guidebook for using video in the classroom.

Designed for the youngest movie directors (ages 4-8), Kids Video Workshop software makes creating customized videos easy and fun. The program's delightful interface guides kids step-by-step through the video-making process. Youngsters can easily add credits, effects, sound, clipart, overlays and even photos to their customized videos. Kids Video Workshop features a wide choice of viewing frames for personalizing videos. The program's export feature enables videos to be emailed or played on other electronic devices. It's simple enough for an older group to play with and have fun.

"KVV is an excellent education product that takes advantage of kids' love affair with visual media," said Judy Iacuzzi, executive director of the USA Toy Library Association. "When children can create their own

video projects to explain math and science principles, they have a much better chance of remembering what they have learned about video and what they are conveying about math. A definite win-win."

Kids Video Workshop includes a teacher guidebook offering a wide variety of video projects, lesson plans and black line masters. Developed by early learning experts, the book includes math, science and language arts activities. Kids Video Workshop offers a high-quality learning tool for the young 21st century student.

About APTE

Established in 1989, APTE is an education publisher of technology-based products for home and school markets worldwide. A leader in the development of visual learning products, APTE's digital photo and video programs have won numerous awards for educational excellence and are enjoyed by kids of all ages.

www.apte.com.



U.S./China Product Safety Summit Continues the Dialogue

The 3rd Biennial U.S.-China Consumer Product Safety Summit between the United States Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) and its counterpart agency, the General Administration of Quality Supervision, Inspection, and Quarantine of the People's Republic of China (AQSIQ), was held in Wuxi, Jinhua, and Beijing, China, October 21-26, 2009.

This year's Summit built upon the activities undertaken by both agencies since the Summit of 2007. The 2007 event focused on ensuring that manufacturers understood the necessity of meeting both voluntary standards and United States requirements (particularly ending the use of leaded paint on toys), information exchanges on recalls and other pressing product safety matters, and training Chinese government officials and manufacturers on CPSC requirements. The creation of a Chinese language section of the CPSC web site emerged from the 2007 discussions.

The goal of the 2009 Summit brought the dialogue to a new level, emphasizing the need for commitment to a more

comprehensive approach to product safety. With input from U.S. and Chinese stakeholders, CPSC and AQSIQ discussed measures to ensure that U.S. importers and Chinese suppliers establish a comprehensive and systemic approach to preventing and detecting safety hazards in consumer products, from product design, through manufacturing, and to the ultimate use of the product by the consumer.

Toward that end, the Summit agenda included an examination of lessons learned over the past two years, as well as a discussion of new regulatory and voluntary tools that can be used to ensure continued progress.

In addition to overarching policy discussions, the Summit agenda included topical discussions of product safety issues, with toys, lead in children's products, all terrain vehicles (ATVs), lighters, and fireworks representing specific product areas where systemic progress may be made.

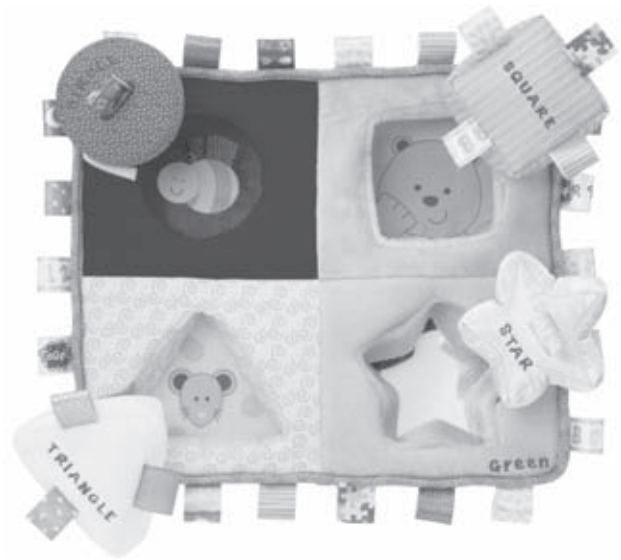
Watch for updates on consumer safety and toys and responsibilities of toy librarians at www.usatla.org.

Puzzled About Puzzles?

Puzzles are going the same route as children's books. Children's books, especially for toddlers, now come with a variety of features. As if words and pictures were not enough, books now have textures, flaps, pull tabs, mirrors, and sound! Puzzles, which have been around since the late 1700s, have jumped on the bandwagon. If words and pictures are not enough for books, then cut-out pieces are no longer enough for puzzles. They differ in a lot more than piece counts! Below we offer a Primer on Early Childhood Puzzles that are now on the market.

My First Taggies® Puzzle

Babies may be introduced to this puzzle as early as nine months. The pieces are soft and padded. Each piece is attached with a ribbon so it never strays from the puzzle. There's a win-some picture under each piece. And the added element of surprise comes when the baby lifts the last piece and sees herself in the mirror! *Ages 9 months +*

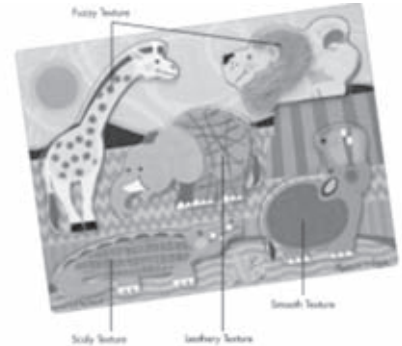


Fresh Start Sensory Puzzles

These puzzles feature a sensory experience provided by chunky pieces and textures. The zoo puzzle could be more aptly called the Petting Zoo. The alligator is scaly, the elephant feels leathery, and the lion's mane is suitably fuzzy! *Ages 1+*

Mix 'n' Match Puzzles

I think these are especially interesting. Each picture is made up of two interchangeable puzzle parts. For example, remove the cat's head and put it with the turtle's body. That might be called a curtle! For children who are just getting started with puzzles, these offer easy success. You almost can't put a piece in the wrong place. *Ages 3+*



Magnetic Puzzles

Trying to attract children to the puzzle table? Well, magnetic puzzles might just 'grab' them! Each puzzle comes with a fishing rod of sorts.

The insect puzzle uses a bug catcher magnet, the sea life puzzle uses bait, and — you guessed it - the car puzzle uses a magnetic tow truck. To remove each piece with the magnet pole requires an added element of concentration. *Ages 3+*

Photographic Puzzles

This is a new and welcome trend. The more traditional wood jigsaw puzzles are now using photographic images to offer more authenticity in the subject matter. Themes include careers, multicultural and multigenerational families, multi-ethnic foods, children with special needs, and houses around the globe. The Garden Fresh Puzzles show fruits and vegetables as they grow in the fields. The berries and grapes are ripe for the picking! *Ages 3+*

As soon as I come across the puzzle that comes with a homing device to find lost pieces, I'll let you know!

— Leslie Silk Eslinger

Education and Product Development Specialist, Becker's School Supplies, www.ShopBecker.com



LA County Toy Library Brings Play-a-Plenty to Homeless Kids

The staff of Upward Bound House would like nothing more than to lose their jobs — because that would mean homelessness and the many problems it causes have been eliminated.

As it stands, though, they have a months-long waiting list of families hoping to obtain housing, classes, and other services offered by the agency. The toy loan program, kicked off Tuesday, is a small and important part of those services.

“The program is an antidote to the loss of dignity that can come from being homeless,” said Booker Pearson, president of the nonprofit’s board of directors. “It can be meaningful for them to feel like somebody cares.”

“Toys are about magic,” added Executive Director David Snow. “They take kids out of this life and allow them to imagine and dream.”

In keeping with that theme, a magician performed at Tuesday’s event. Children from the audience volunteered to help with magic rings and disappearing coin tricks.

“The program gives kids an opportunity to play with toys that their parents might not be able to afford,” said Senior Case Manager Cherrise Payne, who works with families to help them get acclimated to the program, connect with services and save money to move into permanent housing. The toy library, she added, is one of Upward Bound’s after-care services, open to families who currently live or have lived in the Upward Bound House.

“There is a tsunami of homeless children in the (Santa Monica) Westside, in California and in the nation,” Pearson said. “They are the hidden homeless — they don’t sleep in your front yard, throw beer bottles in your back yard or panhandle on the streets. They’re not an irritant or a threat, so we ignore them.”

Upward Bound House, made up of 80 apartments for seniors and 21 units for homeless families with kids, aims to counteract the effects of this negligence.

In addition to receiving a free toy for attending the opening, once the loan center became fully up and running children could borrow toys on a weekly basis from a “toyarian.”

A child receives a “satisfactory” mark each time a toy is returned on time and in good condition. Incentive for good behavior comes in the form of extra toys and “Honor Borrower” status — conferred after 20 satisfactory marks — at which time a child can choose a toy to keep.

The toy loan honor code reinforces the virtues of honesty, patience, courtesy, promptness, cleanliness, cooperation and responsibility. Old and new toys were donated by cor-

porations, toy manufacturers and private citizens.

“The benefit of the program is that my kids get to play with different toys every time they come back,” said Jackie King, Jr., father of seven kids ages nine to 15 who all attended Tuesday’s event. “Different toys show my kids different things — each toy has a different meaning.”

King and his family have taken advantage of Upward Bound House’s parenting and budgeting classes, job aids and trips. Upward Bound also helped them find affordable housing. “They help families in a time of crisis when they really do need it,” King said.

Various local officials made remarks at the event. Flora Gil Krisiloff, from the office of L.A. County Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky, revealed that the county has over 40 toy loan centers — more than any other county in the nation — and Santa Monica Councilman Bobby Shriver encouraged a young girl to pick out a doll she’d had her eye on amid a cloud of bubbles.

“We get to play with toys all day — we’ve got a great job,” said Marcia Benitez of the county’s Department of Public Social Services — which secured many donations for the program.

Joanne Oppenheim Picks Blue Chip Toys:

Here’s what Joanne recommends as toys for the first chest and possibly your toy library.

Crayons

Paint and paper

A ball (different for each age group, but a must at every age)

Blocks (different for each age group and in variety; wooden, paper, plastic all of them)

Wooden train sets and accessories/plastic train sets

Vehicles and mini garages

Ride-ins/ride-ons (age /stage differences)

Push toys (appropriate for toddlers to preschool)

Ballrun (again for toddlers and next ages)

Board games (Lotto to Monopoly)

Dolls (again different for each age range/gender choices)

Puppets (from tracking to acting...different from infants to adults)

Dollhouse/castle/fort (age appropriate)

Puzzles/brainteasers (age/stage-appropriate)

For an update on all Toy Portfolio recommendations and observations, changing almost daily, visit <http://www.toyportfolio.com>. It’s a wonderful resource!



Order Form

Toy Library Resources

Quantity		Member	Non-member
	Child's Play Newsletter (One-Year Subscription) Included with Membership. An 8-page periodical full of news and information about toy libraries and related topics.		
	USA Toy Library Association Operator's Manual Everything you need to know about setting up and operating a toy library.	\$12.50	\$25.00
	Read It! Play It! by Joanne and Stephanie Oppenheim An illustrated, 112-page book of fun activities that build literacy through reading and playing. Now in English and Spanish!	\$12.50	\$25.00
	Learn and Play the Recycle Way by Rhoda Redleaf and Audrey Robertson An illustrated, 200-page book loaded with suggestions for homemade toys that teach.	\$18.00	\$36.00
	Theme Kits Made Easy by Leslie Silk Eslinger 161-page book of clever ideas based on "teaching themes" (fairy tales, animals, city life, etc.) packaged as "kits." A great teaching tool for providers, parents and teachers.	\$20.00	\$40.00
	The Power of Play A discussion about early childhood education with Dr. Michael K. Meyerhoff, The Epicenter Inc.	\$5.00	\$10.00
	Science Fun with Toys by Thomas W. Sills with foreward by Judith Q. Iacuzzi A guide for parents and teachers with resource descriptions for unique & educational toys.	\$18.00	\$36.00

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Thanks for your support!

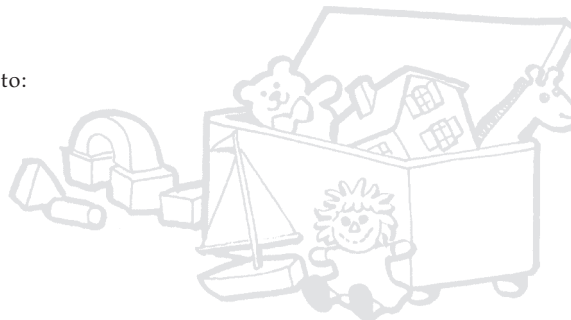
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If you've already received a copy of Child's Play, please pass this along to a friend or colleague. Thank you.

Sharing Resources, Creating Community in Historic St Johns

Tucked away on a quiet street just off the main drag in downtown St Johns near Portland, Ore., sits the Red Sea Church. What's happening in this funky neighborhood location is more than just Sunday service: its ample basement space has been given to two related groups – North Portland *Preserve & Serve Library* and *Swap 'N' Play Community Sharing*.

These two grassroots, community and consciousness-inspired organizations embrace the spirit of sharing. *Preserve & Serve* is a kitchen utensils and tool library of sorts, while *Swap N Play* focuses on shared space devoted to kids and their parents.

Swap 'N' Play engages community members with kids

who want another option to traditional, home-based play groups. Since inhabiting the clean, bright, large space in early January 2009, more than 70 families have committed to the nominal fee of \$15 per month, used to cover utilities, insurance, and other resources like toys and games. When you join *Swap 'N' Play*, you have access to the facility and its resources, including the option to borrow toys. While there's no onsite teacher, parents, caretakers and their kids engage in play, and naturally create their own play groups with new friends and neighbors.

Members are encouraged to bring in unwanted resources and borrow what they need. Member-parent Shelley notes that the spirit of sharing has already made an impact on her three-plus-year-old: "We spend two days a week at Swap N Play, and Kylie borrows a toy or two a week. After a few days, she says 'Mommy, let's take this back for somebody else to use.' I like that she already gets it."

The USA-TLA Board Election

BALLOT is enclosed in this issue.

(Please fax to USA-TLA at 847-864-8473 by November 20, 2009)

Save the Date: 2011

**12th International Toy Library
Conference - São Paulo, Brazil**

(Details to Follow)