

• CHILD'S PLAY •



A PUBLICATION OF THE USA TOY LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

Summer 2017

USA-TLA: Promoting Development Through Toys and Play

Vol. XXVIII

Learn to Play, Play to Learn...Really!

Conference on Sept. 23, 2017, focuses on vanishing aspect of children's education

The idea of “learning to play” may surprise those of us in early childhood education; of course our children play! It’s as easy as A-B-C...but that may just be the problem. Learning to spell (and read and other didactic challenges) are surmounting opportunities to play, a school of thought with diminishing returns, as we who understand the value of play know.

In her comprehensive digest of researchers and educators, Doris Bergen writes in *Play as a Medium for Learning and Development*, “Play has been undervalued as a curricular tool by educators and parents because society has defined the goals of learning, especially school learning, very narrowly...primarily in terms of mastering basic academic skills. Educators have been required to focus on these narrow learning ends even though the knowledge needed by adults in a complex technological society is much broader than the competencies promoted in a basic skills approach...Play, which allows children to choose their learning focus and which fosters a broad range of developmental goals, should be included as an essential learning element.”

USA-TLA Conference Highlights

The upcoming conference in Rochester, N.Y., in September will look at some of “how to’s” of making

open-ended play central to your program, helping more families and educators see how play fits into a school readiness program and enhances it, and what toy lending contributes to the mix.

Byington on Poverty and Play

In impoverished communities play is even more blighted. Parents working two jobs with minimal time at home may have trouble feeding their families much less playing with their children. This is where Lend N Learn of Columbia, Mo., really helps. Lend N Learn brings a program of support that includes play and toy lending into multiple at-risk homes and communities south of Boone County in southern Missouri. And Tammy Byington, also a USA-TLA director, helps lead the charge of support for these families. “Many of our families don’t understand play; have never played themselves,” says Byington, who has been involved with the Lend N Learn program for 25 years. “Without outside support for these families small problems become big ones and big problems can spell familial ruin.”

Toy lending shines here. Over her tenure Byington has brought toy libraries into 20 school districts where 100 percent of the families live below the poverty level. Byington will discuss this program at the conference in Rochester, N.Y.



“One of a cast of terrific speakers at the Rochester Public Library conference in September, Tammy Byington knows well that too many families living in poverty don’t play. Byington understands how important it is for parents and caregivers to actually learn how to play. Her program, Lend N Learn, brings play home to southern Missouri families that live in poverty.”

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More conference highlights:

Thinking Outside the Toy Box!

Participants will learn how to organize a successful toy library with creative thinking, planning and development and learn how to use social media as a leading promotional tool to build community awareness and involvement. Presenters include:

Sue Kirschner, Youth Literacy and Outreach Manager, Cuyahoga County Public Library, Cleveland, Ohio

Sarah Fitts-Romig, Library Assistant, Rochester Public Library

Liza Wilson, Director, Toybrary Austin, Austin, Texas

Special Needs and Play: Focus on Autism

Attendees will take in a history of autism, related myths and truths, and enjoy an overview of educational programs and educational interventions that enhance learning. Presenter is:

Martin Stone, Educational Consultant with 40+ years in the field of Developmental Disabilities

Importance of Play, Practically Speaking - Do You Play?

We will consider whether play is important for only children or is it important for everyone, young and old alike? Indeed, play affects all aspects of our lives and benefits our children. The emotional/social benefits of play will be featured in this workshop. Presenters:

Nina Hillery, Educational Consultant, former Toy Librarian, Akron, Ohio

Anne Friederichs, Children's Librarian, Dakota County Westcott Library, Eagan, MN

"Learn to Play, Play to Learn"

Conference locale - The Central Library of Rochester & Monroe County 115 South Ave., Rochester, NY 14604.

With questions and to register: visit usatla.org or call Judy Iacuzzi (USA Toy Library Association) at 847-612-6966, or Tonia Burton (Rochester Public Library) at 585-428-8151.



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Articles, suggestions and letters are welcome. *Child's Play* newsletter is written, edited, designed and produced by Anthony Iacuzzi Associates.

On the Play Vanguard

Recreating the Block Party! www.ultimateblockparty.com

Board member Nina Hillery recently participated in a conference that featured educators promoting a new play experience – recreating the block party of yesteryear with the intention of getting families out to play.

Its stated goal is “to engage the community in a hands-on, interactive celebration that brings the arts and sciences of learning to life. The plan is simple – channel the ‘block parties’ of the past where families came together to share knowledge, excitement and experiences.

“In this case, we bring together the scientific community of researchers studying learning, the professional community of educators, social workers, and

librarians, non-profit organizations invested in children, such as museums and early learning service providers, and corporations that provide products for children, and families,” according to its website.

Its mission in part is to affect policy about children and they way education is delivered in our society.

Dr. Kathy Hirsch-Pasek, writer, researcher and educator on play and other facets of early learning, helped found The Ultimate Block Party and is worth paying attention to, according to Hillery. Block parties have already taken place in New York City and other major metropolitan areas in the country.

Food (and play) for thought on your block perhaps?



Liza Wilson, newest USA-TLA board Member

USA Toy Library Association Leaders in the News

We welcome Liza Wilson, Director of Toybrary Austin, to the USA-TLA Board. Liza, whose term runs 2016 - 2019, has successfully run her library-store for more than three years and as a recent member of USA-TLA leadership attended the International Toy Library Conference in May in Leiden, the Netherlands. Wilson presented on “running a for-profit toy library.” Visit her exciting community program at www.toybraryaustin.com.



Colorful mobile overhangs Wild West setting ready for play at Toybrary Austin



Election Time! Included in this newsletter is the ballot for the 2017 election of USA-TLA directors. Running for three-year terms, November 1, 2017 – October 31, 2020 are:

- Elaine Adler of Franklin Lakes, NJ
- Marcia Blachman-Benitez of Los Angeles, CA
- Rhoda Redleaf of St. Paul, MN
- Martin Stone of White Plains, NY.

Redleaf and Stone are founding members of the USA Toy Library Association. Ballots may be emailed or faxed to USA-TLA headquarters at 847-864-8473.

The Annual Meeting of the USA Toy Library Association membership will take place on Sunday, September 24, 2017, at 9:00 a.m. at the Courtyard Rochester Brighton, 33 Corporate Woods, Rochester, NY 14623.

Hunting for Quality Toys? Toyportfolio.com

We don't recommend this company – toyportfolio.com – because Joanne Oppenheim, its founder, is a member of our board of directors. We recommend it because of the high quality evaluation on play value and safety given each recommended product. Several toy libraries include only toys recommended by toyportfolio.com in their collections of toys.



Joanne Oppenheim

Here's how the toyportfolio chooses products to recommend. According to the website,

“Companies submit products to us all year long. We review the submissions, weeding out products that are unsafe, unsound or obviously unworthy. Promising prod-

ucts are then kid tested by families nationwide. Finally, these results are considered as part of the overall evaluation of the product. The best of the best receive our year-end *Oppenheim Toy Portfolio Platinum Awards*.

“Unlike publications that rely exclusively on the judgment of kid-testers, our reviews take kid-testers' responses to a product as one of the many factors to be considered, along with educational and play value, safety, age appropriateness, and other factors. We also factor in the feedback we receive from parents about the toy, including the packaging, instructions, ease of assembly and overall play and fun value of the product.

Why not rely just on kid-testers?

What would the results be of kid-testing in a supermarket? Your basket might be full of heavily advertised

convenience foods and candy and ice cream, but low on nutritional balance. We want to make sure your basket for play is also balanced, so our reviews give you the opinion of our editorial staff, informed by kid-testers and their parents.

About our Safety Requirements:

We require that toy companies verify that each toy they submit meets current federal and California safety standards and that they verify the toys have been tested in an independent third party lab. We are delighted that the majority of companies have complied with our standards. We do not conduct this type of testing.

Green Toys in the News

Waste 360, online publication, ran a story recently about how toy libraries are rescuing toys from landfill. “Many toy libraries operate with a small budget and staff and because of that, gently used, second-hand toys are considered treasures.” The Minneapolis Toy Library received a Green Partners grant that has allowed the library to incorporate ideas of waste reduction and eco-friendly toys into its publicity and work with families. It recommends Green Toys, Tegu, Ever Earth and HAPE for quality, eco-friendly toys.



Shout-out to Lego

Did you know that Lego is the world's most profitable toy company, as reported in the Chicago Tribune, December 2016? And the CEO who recently stepped down, Jorgen Vig Knudstorp, was once a kindergarten teacher!