

# Guided Play in Early Education: Becoming Brilliant

Kathy Hirsh-Pasek, Ph. D.



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## What do you hear?



Repeat after me

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## Now change the lens

Content

Collaboration (Following others)

Math and division

Relations: high low

shave and a hair-cut two bits

Time

Repeat after me

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### What's going on here?

From America to Zanzibar exhibit



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### Change the lens!



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### And what could we possibly make of this artwork?



Marly 24 mo.



D'Hani 34 mo.

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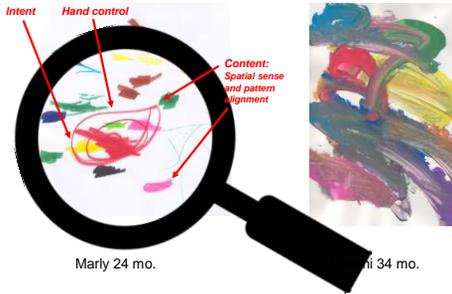
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And what could we possibly make of this artwork?



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It is time to change the lens....



- On the way we think about learning and education – in and out of school
- On the way that parents and policy makers think about the social and academic value of an integrated education fostered through play and active learning!

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Some interesting facts

- We are entering a new era, a knowledge age, in which information is doubling every 2.5 years.
- We are leaving the information age, where getting the “factoids” was enough...
- Integrating information and innovation is key.

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**A talk in 5 parts:**



- The current state of play in early education
- Defining playful learning
- Playful learning and the 6Cs
  - Social skills
  - Cognitive skills
- An integrative model
- The 6Cs at home, school and in the community

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**Whatever happened to play?**



In 1981, a typical school-age child in the United States had 40% of her time open for play. By 1997, the time for play had shrunk to 25%.

What percentage is it down to now??

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**This narrow view of success even pervades our everyday activities:**

Check out how modern day kids can now learn during potty training!



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**We are wearing out our youngest children by Engaging in "drill-and-kill" and Testing for "factoids" in our assessments rather than real learning**



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**These issues and more prompted reports from the American Academy of Pediatricians in October 2006 and again in 2012! They wrote...**



Play is essential to the social, emotional, cognitive, and physical well-being of children beginning in early childhood. It is a natural tool for children to develop resiliency as they learn to cooperate, overcome challenges, and negotiate with others. Play also allows children to be creative. It provides time for parents to be fully engaged with their children, to bond with their children, and to see the world from the perspective of their child.

Regina M. Mittleer et al., 2012

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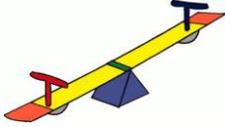
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The challenge is to strike a balance...

between the desire to enrich children's lives and the need to foster play as a foundation for learning skills like collaboration, communication, content, critical thinking, and creative innovation and confidence.



Where content is 1 – but only 1 of the 6Cs

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Defining play

### FREE PLAY

whether with objects, fantasy and make believe, or physical, is 1) fun, 2) active 3) has no extrinsic goals, 4) interactive, 5) meaningful, 6) often, though not always, socially interactive, 7) can contain a certain element of make-believe

(Hirsh-Pasek et al., 2009; Garvey, 1977; Hirsh-Pasek & 2003; Christie & Johnsen, 1983;LEGO, 2017)



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**A tale of two Spocks – on Collaboration and social skills**



Dr. Benjamin Spock got it all along: social and emotional regulation matters -- a lot



Mr. Spock did not

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**Collaboration – teamwork, getting along with others, social bonds, include... social-emotional-regulation**

- Impulse and emotion control
- Self-guidance of thought and behavior (private speech)
- Planning
- Self-reliance
- Socially responsible behavior

Bronson, 2001; Kopp, 1991; Rothbart & Bates, 2006; Galinsky, 2005

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**And measures of self-regulation predict?**

- persistence (Grit, Confidence)
- task mastery
- academic achievement (Communication; Content)
- social Collaboration
- moral maturity (concern about wrongdoing, willingness to apologize)
- sharing and helpfulness

Eisenberg, 2010; Harris et al., 2007; Kochanska & Askan, 2006; Posner & Rothbart, 2007; Zhou, Lengua, & Wang, 2009; Berk & Meyers, 2014; and many others.

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**The shocking finding??  
Children with social emotional control do better in school...**



Mischel et.al., (1989) for a review

Guess what happened over time!!!!  
Those who waited scored over 200 points better on their SATs?

Eigsti, et al., 2006

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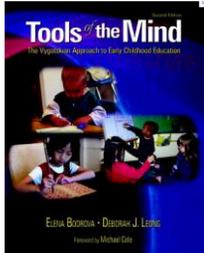
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**Further, some research suggests that we can teach emotional control through guided play**



(Bodrova & Leong, 2006, Blair & Raver, 2015; but see Thal, 2012, Lillard et al., 2012)

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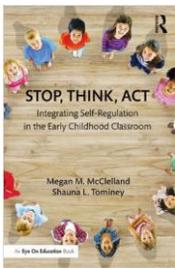
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**Megan McClelland's classroom games for social regulation**



- **Conducting an Orchestra**  
Every child use a musical instrument. The circle leader used a drum stick as a conducting baton. When the conductor waved the baton, children played their instruments. When the conductor put the baton down, children stopped.
- **Drum Beats**  
Teachers used drum beats to represent different actions that children can do while sitting (e.g., clapping or stomping) or while moving around the room (e.g., walking or dancing). For example, children walked quickly to fast drumming, slowly to slow drumming, and froze when the drumming stopped

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Bottom Line?

- Collaboration is a foundation for skills in communication, content, creative innovation, confidence— and you can get it all through guided play!

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Focus on reading...



- Telling stories
- Word play (what rhymes with "hat"?)
- Singing songs
- Dialogical reading
- Reading product labels
- Engaging conversations
- Dramatic play (Roskos & Christie, 2013)

A recent paper by Lillard et al., 2012 suggests language and reading outcomes are the strongest examples of where even free play encourages development

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Finally on the "C" of Critical thinking and hypothesis testing

Lucas et al find that....

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**When children are better (or at least more open-minded) learners than adults: developmental differences in learning the forms of causal relationships.**

Lucas, L.J., Gweon, G., Spelke, E.S., & Schulz, J. (2014)

**Preschoolers Outsmart College Students In Figuring Out Gadgets**

Abstract: Children learn causal relationships quickly and naturally, but adults are slower to learn the same relationships. This research shows that children are better learners than adults when it comes to learning the forms of causal relationships. Preschoolers were more likely than adults to generalize the causal properties of relationships that they are less likely to be able to learn from current evidence. These results are consistent with the predictions of a hierarchical Bayesian model.

And Gweon, Goodman, Spelke & Schultz (2010)



Find that direct instruction (while effective), "limits spontaneous exploration and discovery" relative to play!

Series of horizontal lines for notes



In fact a new consensus report from Phillips et al., 2017 suggests.....



- Far from the "drill and kill" methods justifiably admonished by child development experts, successful evidence-based, skill-focused curricula embed learning in playful preschool activities, including story-book reading, games, art, and discovery activities that are conducted in both small and large group contexts and grounded in a sound developmental framework. In contrast to the whole-child approaches, these curricula provide teachers with lesson plans to follow in which playful activities are strategically organized to present children with learning opportunities that are focused, sequential and cumulative. p. 39

Series of horizontal lines for notes



Importantly, digital toys do not always afford the same advantages

- Even play that is fun, but not well guided will not yield the same results – witness e-toys.....



**Conclusions and Relevance:** Play with electronic toys is associated with decreased quantity and quality of language input compared with play with books or traditional toys. To promote early language development, play with electronic toys should be discouraged. Traditional toys may be a valuable alternative for parents during play time of their toddlers in a professional activity.

Sosa, A. (2015) JAMA



**Talking Shape: Parental Language With Electronic Versus Traditional Shape Sorters**

Sosa, A. (2015) JAMA



The Ghost in the Touchscreen: Social Scaffolds Promote Learning by Toddlers

Zimmerman et al., 2017; see also Verdine et al. 2017

Series of horizontal lines for notes













**Parkopoly:** Note dice that encourage the learning of fractions




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**What changes could we make in our communities or classrooms to augment learning? Use the grid...**

	Collaboration	Communication	Content	Critical Thinking	Creative Innovation	Confidence
4	Building it together	Tell a joint story	Expertise	Evidence	Vision	Draw to feel
3	Back and forth	Dialogue	Making connections	Opinions	Voice	Calculated risks
2	Sid-by-side	Show and tell	Wide breadth/ shallow understanding	Truths offer	Means-end	Where do I start?
1	On my own	Raw emotion	Early learning/ Situation specific	Seeing is believing	Experimentation	Blame on

**An arts mural project?**

**Putting on a show?**

**A mini maker's fair to solve a problem?** (how to make the door to the outside open more easily??)

- How might each of these activities help grow the 6Cs? How might teachers use them to help parents change the lens?
- What are you already doing in playful learning that can feed the 6Cs
- How can you make the link from activity to outcome more obvious?

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The 6C's framework helps us think differently as we prepare children for the challenges of today and the workforce of tomorrow.

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Evidence from the science of learning supports a wider discussion of breadth in education. The 6Cs make visible the connections from the sandbox to the boardroom. And it helps us achieve this education *in* and *out* of school – through playful learning.

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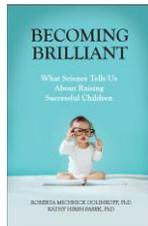
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**RE-imagining global education requires re-imagining our definition of success!**

In *Becoming Brilliant*, we suggest that a new definition should prevail:

*Society thrives when we craft environments, in and out of school, that support happy, healthy, thinking and social children who become collaborative, creative, competent and responsible citizens tomorrow.*



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**It is time.....**

To change the lens on the way we think about success and about learning!



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