



Trying Together

# Finding Joy through Playful Learning

**February 3-4, 2021**

**February 9-10, 2021**

Finding Joy through Playful Learning aims to bring together educators, researchers, policymakers, and practitioners who have a variety of experiences related to education, play, and learning. The conference will take place via Zoom over the course of several days covering six topics related to playful learning. The goal is to generate dialogue among different stakeholders and share best practices to support children and families in learning through play.

# Rethinking Education During and Post COVID-19

**February 3, 2021**

**3-5 PM (ET)**

Children authentically learn through play. Developmentally appropriate practices allow for multiple opportunities for personal, meaningful play experiences in and out of the classroom - but what has this looked like during the pandemic and remote learning? This workshop will discuss how schools and community organizations have supported children's growth and learning throughout the pandemic - as well as share key takeaways and what the future holds for teaching and learning through play.

**Opening and Introduction – Shelly Kessler**

**Featured Speakers**

**Kathy Hirsh-Pasek, Ph.D., Temple University & The Brookings Institution**

**Dr. Scott Miller, Avonworth Primary Center**

**Jen Schnakenberg, Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy**

**Q&A with Panel – Shelly Kessler**

**Breakout Rooms for Discussion**

**Closing and Feedback – Shelly Kessler**



**Moderator**

**Shelly Kessler**

Shelly Kessler is the Executive Director of Playful Learning Landscapes Action Network. For over twenty-five years, Shelly has been both a practitioner and advisor to nonprofit and philanthropic organizations nationally, as well as nongovernmental organizations globally. She has deep experience in strategy and business planning, organizational and leadership development; and program planning and assessment, as well as being a trained facilitator.

# Rethinking Education During and Post COVID-19

## Featured Speakers



### **Kathryn Hirsh-Pasek, PhD**

Kathy is the Stanley and Debra Lefkowitz Faculty Fellow in the Department of Psychology at Temple University and a Senior Fellow at the Brookings Institution. Her research examines the development of early language and literacy as well as the role of play in learning. With her long-term collaborator, Roberta Golinkoff, she is author of 14 books and hundreds of publications and a fellow of the Cognitive Science Society. She is highly decorated by the field's leading organizations. She is a Fellow of the American Psychological Association and the American Psychological Society. She serves on the Steering Committee of the Latin American School for Education, Cognitive Neural Science as well as on the advisory board for Vroom, The Boston Children's Museum, Disney Junior, The Free to Be Initiative and Jumpstart. Her recent book, *Becoming Brilliant: What the science tells us about raising successful children*, released in 2016 was on the NYTimes Best Seller List in Education and Parenting. Kathy received her bachelor's degree from the University of Pittsburgh and her Ph.D. from the University of Pennsylvania and is a frequent spokesperson for her field appearing in the NYTimes, npr and in international television outlets.



### **Dr. Scott Miller**

Dr. Miller is principal at Avonworth Primary Center (K-2) located in Pittsburgh, PA. His expertise and interests include early childhood education pedagogy, creativity in the elementary school setting as part of effective lesson design, and the development of maker spaces. Dr. Miller holds leadership positions on his district's technology committee and on Allegheny County's Hi5 Kindergarten Transition Committee and actively collaborates on a regular basis with Trying Together.



### **Jen Schnakenberg**

As assistant director of education, Jen serves as the interface between the Parks Conservancy's education department, local schools, and other environmental education organizations. Jen holds bachelor's degrees in psychology and biology from the University of Pittsburgh and has worked in the field of outdoor environmental education for 20 years, joining the Parks Conservancy in 2014. In all her work, she has focused on creating and sharing programs that increase understanding of our reliance on natural systems and that help students acquire skills to continue learning about the world and sharing in its care.

# How Play Can Improve Mental Health and Wellbeing

**February 4, 2021  
9-11 AM (ET)**

Children make sense of what's happening in the world around them through play, and it impacts their mental health and wellbeing. This workshop will discuss how essential play and positive relationships are in supporting children's learning and impact their mental health and overall wellbeing.

**Opening – Sheba Gittens, Community Artist**

**Introduction – Emily Neff, Trying Together**

**Featured Speakers**

**Cindy Eggleton, Brilliant Detroit**

**Sheba Gittens, Community Artist**

**Sarah Grubb, Trying Together**

**Q&A with Panel – Emily Neff, Trying Together**

**Breakout Rooms for Discussion**

**Closing and Feedback – Emily Neff, Trying Together**



## **Moderator**

### **Emily Neff**

As the Assistant Director of Public Policy and Practice at Trying Together, Emily works to strengthen the connection and alignment of the early childhood continuum through various policy, advocacy, and system building activities. She engages with policymakers, educators, and families to advocate for increased access to high-quality early learning experiences. Passionate about play and social emotional learning, Emily co-leads the Recess Advocacy Team, a group of organizations dedicated to health and wellness, education, and play focused on recess practices and policies in elementary schools. Previously, Emily worked for the New York City Department of Education as a Family Support Coordinator, serving families and students from 25 elementary and middle schools. She began her career in education as a first grade teacher in Hazelhurst, Mississippi. Emily is an alumna of Teachers College, Columbia University (Education Policy, M.A.) and Allegheny College (English, B.A.).



# How Play Can Improve Mental Health and Wellbeing

## Featured Speakers



### Cindy Eggleton, PhD

Cindy Eggleton, Co-Founder and CEO of Brilliant Detroit, has a long history of working “with, for, and by” families to build a Detroit where children are successful. At the United Way for Southeastern Michigan, she oversaw a \$60 million education portfolio and brought the Federal Social Innovation Fund to Detroit, supported efforts to improve high school graduation rates and train over 15,000 early childhood caregivers, and more. Today, she leads Brilliant Detroit, which coordinates existing evidence-based programming through houses in the middle of neighborhoods to ensure that families with young children have what they need to be school-ready, healthy, and stable. During the first four years of her time as CEO, Cindy grew Brilliant Detroit to serve 7,500 children and caregivers with over 95 organizational partners operating out of eight home-based hubs. She sees this as the work of her life and is committed to growing this impact to affect population-level change in Detroit.



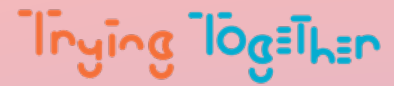
### Sheba Gittens

Sheba Gittens is an anti-racist heActivist, art educator, and creative consultant. She is a trained wellness practitioner, certified anti-racist raja yoga and prenatal yoga instructor, and joy facilitator. She received her BA in Africana Studies with a focus in English Literature and spends her professional career working with and serving youth of all ages (nationally and internationally). She uses mixed mediums to educate and expand the consciousness of those she serves.



### Sarah Grubb

Sarah Grubb, M.Ed., works for Trying Together and Early Learning Resource Center (ELRC) Region 5 as an Everyday Interactions Design Strategist, a position that inspires her to delve deeply into the power of ordinary interactions between educators and young children. Sarah’s work with educators, children, and families has taken many forms, including joyfully serving as a mentor teacher at Pittsburgh’s Spanish immersion preschool and kindergarten as well as an educator at an all-outdoor Forest Kindergarten north of Pittsburgh. She has taught young children in Nicaragua, supported language access as a Spanish language interpreter, and directed cultural immersion and community service programs in the Dominican Republic and Peru. At the heart of her work lies Sarah’s commitment to examining the impact of cultural values, language, nature and—most importantly—the small, everyday moments that form the core of our most profound connections with others.



# **Addressing Equity Issues Through Playful Learning**

**February 4, 2021  
3-5 PM (ET)**

The freedom to play improves children's social, emotional, physical, and cognitive skills. All children deserve equitable opportunities to experience the joy of playful learning. This workshop will focus on resources and strategies to promote equitable and meaningful learning opportunities.

**Opening and Introduction – Dr. Helen Hadani**

**Featured Speakers**

**Dr. Nikole Hollins-Sims, Pennsylvania Training and Technical  
Assistance Network**

**Dr. Mandy Maguire, University of Texas at Dallas**

**Q&A with Panel – Dr. Helen Hadani**

**Breakout Rooms for Discussion**

**Closing and Feedback – Dr. Helen Hadani**

## **Moderator**

**Dr. Helen Shwe Hadani**

As a fellow at the Brookings Institution, Helen leads Playful Learning Landscapes—an initiative that brings together the fields of developmental science and placemaking with the goal of improving child and community outcomes. She has more than 20 years of experience in research and has worked with toy and media companies, including Disney, Sesame Workshop, Apple, LEGO, and Fisher-Price. Helen holds a Bachelor of Arts in Cognitive Science from the University of Rochester and a Doctorate in Psychology from Stanford University.



# Addressing Equity Issues Through Playful Learning

**February 4, 2021**

**3-5 PM (ET)**

The freedom to play improves children's social, emotional, physical, and cognitive skills. All children deserve equitable opportunities to experience the joy of playful learning. This workshop will focus on resources and strategies to promote equitable and meaningful learning opportunities.



## **Dr. Nikole Hollins-Sims**

Nikole Y. Hollins-Sims, Ed.D., is an educational consultant for the Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network (PaTTAN)-Harrisburg Office. She currently serves as the co-statewide lead for the Behavior initiative, as well as an active member of the Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) initiative. In addition, she is a Special Advisor for Equity for the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE). Dr. Hollins-Sims is also involved in the State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP) with a focus on increasing the graduation rates of students with disabilities. Finally, Dr. Hollins-Sims is a Pennsylvania certified school psychologist with a specific interest in social justice. She has also conducted research around caregivers of children of incarcerated parents and their motivation to engage in family-school partnerships.



## **Dr. Mandy Maguire**

Dr. Maguire is an associate professor at the University of Texas at Dallas. Her research explores language development using behavioral and neural measures. Her current work focuses on how and why poverty influences language development in the school years.

**Talk Overview:** In this presentation we will discuss current findings related to how and why poverty impacts brain development as well as new insights into how we can use brain function to guide interventions such as Playful Learning Landscapes. Yvonne Ralph is joining Dr. Maguire to facilitate the discussion.

# Activating Communities Around Playful Learning

**February 9, 2021  
3-5 PM (ET)**

Play fosters opportunities for children to learn and develop communication, problem solving, and creativity skills. What does it look like for communities to elevate playful learning? This workshop will highlight ways individuals and organizations can activate playful learning including the why and how.

**Opening and Introduction – Roberta Golinkoff, PhD**

## **Featured Speakers**

**Ariana Brazier, ATL Parent Like a Boss**

**Bettye Ferguson, Belmont Alliance Civic Association**

**Justin Forzano, Open Field**

**Shari Hersh & Gamar Markarian, Mural Arts**

**Sarah Siplak, Playful Pittsburgh Collaborative**

## **Round Robin Breakout Rooms**

**Closing and Feedback – Roberta Golinkoff, PhD**

## **Moderator**

### **Roberta Golinkoff, PhD**

Roberta Michnick Golinkoff, Ph.D., Cornell University, is the Unidel H. Rodney Sharp Professor of Education at the University of Delaware. She is also a member of two other departments: Psychological and Brain Sciences and Linguistics and Cognitive Science and director of the Child's Play, Learning, and Development laboratory. She has held the John Simon Guggenheim Fellowship, the James McKeen Cattell sabbatical award, and the American Psychological Association's Distinguished Service Award as well as the Urie Bronfenbrenner Award for Lifetime Contribution to Developmental Psychology in the Service of Science and Society. In 2015, she received the James McKeen Cattell Fellow Award from the Association for Psychological Science. Golinkoff was also named a Distinguished Scientific Lecturer by the American Psychological Association and in 2017, she was awarded the Society for Research in Child Development's Distinguished Scientific Contribution award. In 2018, she was awarded the American Educational Research Association's Outstanding Public Communication of Education Research Award.

Her research has been funded by the National Science Foundation, the National Institutes of Health, the Institute of Education Sciences, and the LEGO Foundation. In addition to over 150 journal publications and book chapters, she has authored 16 books and monographs. Passionate about the dissemination of psychological science for improving our schools and families' lives, she and Hirsh-Pasek (her long standing collaborator) also write books for parents and practitioners. *How Babies Talk* (1999); the award-winning *Einstein Never Used Flash Cards* (2004) and *A Mandate for Playful Learning in Preschool* (2009). Her latest book, *Becoming Brilliant: What Science Tells Us About Raising Successful Children* is with APA Press and reached the New York Times best seller list.





# Activating Communities Around Playful Learning

## Featured Speakers



### Ariana Brazier

Ari is an English, Critical & Cultural Studies Doctoral Candidate at the University of Pittsburgh. Her research considers Black children and families, housing insecurity and poverty, and cultural play practices. She has conducted three years of in-field ethnographic research with Black children and their communities in the southeast United States. Ari is the CEO and President of the 501c3 nonprofit ATL Parent Like A Boss, Inc. (Parent LAB) whose mission is to enhance generational literacies through play in underserved African American communities. They are an intergenerational group of Black women with diverse experiences in community-based education. They care deeply about preserving the cultural legacies and traditions that joyfully sustain Black families. In addition to family-oriented community-based programming, Parent LAB hosts both signature and tailored workshops. Their workshops are grounded in an anti-racist, social justice framework and based on their research and knowledge of best practices regarding child development and family engagement.



### Bettye Ferguson

Bettye Ferguson is the President and Founder of the Belmont Alliance Civic Association, CDC, a Community Based Incorporation situated in the Belmont District within West Philadelphia. Bettye's background in Civic Engagement, Youth Development and Non-Profit Management has led her to manage outreach programs providing low-income families with free Infant/Toddler and Adult Diapers, personal care items, clothes, coats, books and resource Information that will help one gain a better life.



### Justin Forzano

Justin Forzano is the founder and CEO of Open Field, a Pittsburgh-based Sport for Social Impact organization with the mission to improve the lives and futures of youth through soccer by promoting health, education, equity, and peace. Under Forzano's leadership, the organization engages nearly 1,000 youth in year-round educational soccer programming in Cameroon, Africa, and Pittsburgh, PA. In addition to leading the organization, Justin is an active coach mentor, facilitating programming for immigrant and refugee youth in the Pittsburgh community. He holds a Master of Public Policy Management from the University of Pittsburgh Graduate School of Public and International Affairs and is a graduate of the University of Dayton with a Bachelor of Civil Engineering. Forzano is an Albert Schweitzer Fellow for Life and was named one of Pittsburgh Magazine's '40 Under 40' in 2018.



### Shari Hersh

Shari Hersh, Director of Environmental Justice Department at Mural Arts Philadelphia, organizes social practice art projects and processes in the public sphere that convene people of diverse backgrounds and disciplines in horizontal collaborations to mobilize for Environmental Justice in their neighborhoods and across Philly. The projects center the brilliance, expertise and a wide range of skill sets across social divisions with leadership of people from marginalized communities. Hersh precipitates encounters, exploration, discussion, and learning that deconstruct white supremacy and colonialist notions of service to reveal the necessity of mutuality and to build a more just future.

# Activating Communities Around Playful Learning

## Featured Speakers



### **Gamar Markarian**

Gamar Markarian is an Armenian Lebanese designer, urbanist and systems thinker, interested in media and communication. She received my BS in Landscape architecture in 2006, an MS in Design and Urban Ecologies in 2016 and a graduate certification in Documentary filmmaking in 2018. Currently living in New York, Gamar collaborates with The Philadelphia Mural Arts Program as a design strategist focusing on the design and implementation of playful participatory research and design processes.



### **Sarah Siplak**

Sarah works for Trying Together as a contractor overseeing the work of the Playful Pittsburgh Collaborative, an initiative dedicated to advancing the importance of play in the lives of children, families, and communities in the Pittsburgh region. Prior to joining Trying Together, Siplak served as the Director of Programs at Saturday Light Brigade, an educational community radio program.

# Using Technology to Strengthen the Way We Learn and Play

**February 10, 2021  
11 AM-1 PM (ET)**

Now more than ever technology has become a tool for learning. This workshop will discuss strategies to use technology in developmentally appropriate ways to engage children and families in learning. Participants will also be encouraged to think outside the box about forms of technology and how creative and imaginative play helps children connect learning objectives to real world application.

**Opening and Introduction – Jenn Zosh, PhD**

## Featured Speakers

**Katie Gullone, Trying Together**

**Megan Rooney, La Escuelita Arcoiris**

**Keith Griffin and Javier Maisonet, MathTalk**

**Elias Blinkoff, Temple University**

**Simran Mulchandani, and Karishma Menon, Project Rangeet**

**Q&A with Panel – Shelly Kessler**

**Round Robin Breakout Rooms**

**Closing and Feedback – Jenn Zosh, PhD**

## Moderator

**Jenn Zosh, PhD**

Jennifer is an Associate Professor of Human Development and Family Studies at The Pennsylvania State University's Brandywine campus. As the Director of the Brandywine Child Development Lab, she studies how infants and young children learn about the world around them. Her areas of expertise and publication include playful learning, the impact of technology on children, working memory, mathematical cognition, and language acquisition. Notably, she was co-lead author on a recent (2015) publication in Psychological Science in the Public Interest about putting education back in educational apps through the application of research in the science of how children learn. She presents regularly at professional meetings including: the Society for Research in Child Development, International Congress on Infant Studies, National Academy of Sciences Children and Screens colloquium, International Mind Brain and Education Society, and others. A major driving force in her career is dissemination and translation of scientific discoveries to the public via blogging and media appearances. This translational work has appeared on The Conversation, PBS Parents, The Huffington Post, the Brookings Institution, the Joan Ganz Cooney Center, NPR Radio Times, and beyond. She is also involved in the dissemination of developmental research through her involvement with Living Laboratories embedded in children's museums and her roles on advisory boards for organizations (e.g., Ultimate Block Party, Urban ThinkScape). She received her bachelors degree in Psychology from the University of Delaware and her Ph.D. in Psychological and Brain Sciences from Johns Hopkins University.





# Using Technology to Strengthen the Way We Learn and Play

## Featured Speakers



### Elias Blinkoff

Elias is a third-year graduate student in developmental psychology working with Dr. Kathy Hirsh-Pasek. He received his B.A. in Psychology and Educational Studies from Swarthmore College in 2017, where he worked with Dr. Daniel Grodner to research sentence processing. Before arriving at Temple, Elias mentored 7th-grade students in the School District of Philadelphia through City Year. He currently pursues research at the intersection of developmental psychology and education with interest in the connections between the science of learning, classroom instruction, and education policy. Elias works on "The 6 Cs Go to School" project, which brings the 6 Cs of learning identified by Dr. Hirsh-Pasek and Dr. Roberta Golinkoff - collaboration, communication, content, critical thinking, creativity, and confidence - into elementary school classrooms through partnerships with educational administrators and teachers. His newest area of "6 Cs" research explores how the same skills apply in higher education. Elias also conducts research on the relation between inquiry and vocabulary development in preschool literacy instruction.



### Keith Griffin

Born and raised in Cambridge, Keith Griffin has been involved with youth physical education for the past 27 years. He coached multiple youth sports leagues for ages 4 through 12. Keith serves on the Cambridge Family Council policy board to help build equity in health and educational opportunities across the city. In 2018, Keith joined MathTalk where he applies his carpentry skills to help create and develop math installations in public spaces throughout the community where he currently lives and raises his 6 children. Keith works in Family and Community Engagement for MathTalk. He enjoys the outdoors. In his spare-time he likes to fish, cook/grill and spend time with family.



### Katherine Gullone

Katherine Gullone is the Program Director for Message from Me at Trying Together. In her work, Katherine leads the project development of Message from Me, an innovative digital tool co-designed by Carnegie Mellon University's CREATE Lab and Trying Together. She holds a Master of Education with a focus in Early Childhood Education from Carlow University and a Bachelor of Arts in Interpersonal Communication with a minor in Spanish from Meredith College. Additionally, Katherine is a certified Pre-K-4th grade teacher in Pennsylvania and a Certified Pennsylvania Quality Assurance System Instructor.



### Javier Maisonet

Javier Maisonet started working with MathTalk in 2017 as a Project Management Consultant, since August of 2020 Javier has transitioned fulltime to the role of MathTalk Director of Partnerships and Strategic Initiatives. Javier has worked with youth and children since he was 16 working at the Pre-School his Mother oversaw. Since that time Javier has earned a Bachelor's Degree from DePaul University in Public Policy and a Master's Degree from the University of Illinois at Chicago in Educational Leadership. Javier has worked in the nonprofit sector for 20 years having led the Chicago Site of the National Organization The Young People's Project and most recently held the position of Youth Development Director for ASPIRA of Illinois. Javier lives in Chicago, IL with his wife and 3 children who are 8, 6, and 2, years old. MathTalk has excited Javier since he was presented with the idea and enjoys playing with the emerging technology and installations with his kids and their friends.



# Using Technology to Strengthen the Way We Learn and Play

## Featured Speakers



### **Karishma Menon**

Karishma graduated from college with a B.A in English Literature. She worked as a documentary film maker in Bombay before moving to Mallorca to work for acclaimed production company – Palma Pictures. She transitioned from there to blueFROG, a live music venture based in Bombay as its first employee involved in executing the launch of its flagship music club in Bombay which was later rated by the Independent (UK) as one of the top ten music venues in the world. She's a co-founder at Project Rangeet where she works at the confluence of music, design, education and technology.



### **Simran Mulchandani**

Simran is a Director of Singaporean NGO, Global Mangrove Trust, that has built a peer to peer platform for Mangrove Reforestation. He was a Director at Lykke Corp, a Swiss Fintech company building a marketplace for blockchain assets. Earlier, Simran completed his B.Sc. in Computer Science from Brown University and worked at J.P. Morgan before setting up and running internationally acclaimed live music venture blueFROG. He is a Founder and Director of Business Development at Project Rangeet, and hopes to establish a framework in which nature and society are at peace.



### **Megan Rooney**

Megan Rooney is the Founder and Director of Education of La Escuelita Arcoiris, a Spanish Immersion Program in Pittsburgh, PA.

At the forefront of La Escuelita's philosophy are the ideas of children as constructors of their own curriculum, and the joy inherent in creating and collaborating. These values guide us in our journey to become lifelong learners and competent problem solvers.

# Replicable and Low-Cost Ideas for Playful Learning

**February 10, 2021**

**3-5 PM (ET)**

Play is not about expensive equipment or materials; playful learning happens all around us with everyday items. This workshop will serve as an idea generator as panelists share strategies for replicable and low-cost ideas for playful learning.

## Opening and Introduction – Brenna Hassinger-Das, PhD

### Featured Speakers

**Rebecca Fabiano, Fab Youth Philly**

**Amy Kronberg, Learn to Earn Dayton**

**Shannon Merenstein, HATCH Art Studio**

**Aishwarya Narayana & Shashwath Ravisundar, HUME**

## Q&A with Panel – Brenna Hassinger-Das, PhD

### Round Robin Breakout Rooms

## Closing and Feedback – Brenna Hassinger-Das, PhD

### Moderator

#### Brenna Hassinger-Das, PhD

Brenna Hassinger-Das, Ph.D., is an Assistant Professor of Psychology at Pace University. Her research examines children's play and learning in home, school, and community contexts, particularly for children experiencing poverty. Her areas of expertise encompass executive functioning, early number sense, and vocabulary acquisition. She is particularly interested in investigating the role of play and games for learning. She is committed to translating her research for use by the public through community-based research projects as well as blog posts and commentaries featured in outlets such as The Huffington Post and additional local outlets.



### Featured Speakers

#### Rebecca Fabiano

For nearly 25 years, Rebecca (She/Her/Hers) has worked in various capacities across nonprofit and youth-serving organizations, served on boards and helped to build solid youth programs that engage, encourage, and create spaces for positive youth development. As a program leader, she has successfully raised funds and managed program budgets; hired and supervised staff; developed and sustained strong community partnerships and designed award-winning programming. Rebecca is a serial entrepreneur, loves being an Aunt and mom to two neighborhood cats Tria and Grace, who made their way in to her home and her heart. Her favorite games to play include: Basketball, "Hot, hot, Cold" and any kind of tag.



# Replicable and Low-Cost Ideas for Playful Learning

## Featured Speakers



### Amy Kronberg

Amy Kronberg is an adjunct faculty member at the University of Dayton, an early learning consultant for Learn to Earn and Preschool Promise, and a PhD student in Pre-K-12 Educational Leadership. Her focus is on infant and toddler development, low-cost playful learning experiences, and social-emotional learning for children and adults.

**Talk Overview:** In Dayton, OH, the Play on Purpose (POP) initiative involves identifying community common areas as places for playful interactions between children and their families. Additionally, our Preschool Promise playboxes involve recipes for play that use common household objects to bring playful learning to life. Our team is eager to share our insights into our journey from dream to dream-come-true!



### Shannon Merenstein

Shannon Merenstein is a lifelong Pittsburgher and educator interested in art making and playful learning with young children. For over 14 years she has worked alongside children ages eight months to 12 years, encouraging exploration, discovery, curiosity, and wonder through child-centered, open-ended art and play experiences. In 2015, she opened Hatch, a space dedicated to providing opportunities for creative thinking, problem solving, risk taking, and self-expression. In 2017, days before the birth of her second son, Shannon's first book *Collage Workshop for Kids* (co-authored by the studio educators at the Eric Carle Museum) was published by Quarto Kids. In 2020, Hatch moved from Point Breeze to Wilkinsburg, undergoing a major shift in offerings with unwavering dedication to mission through various programs including the provision of Hatch Create + Play kits to classrooms around the country paired with hands-on professional development around creative thinking and playful learning. Shannon is a workshop and professional development leader, utilizing human centered design strategies to effect change in education and collaborates with many organizations and schools in Pittsburgh and beyond. Shannon is also co-founder of The Creativity Project, releasing monthly guides to support lifelong creativity at home and at school.



### Aishwarya Narayana

Aishwarya is an architect, experimental psychologist, and poet who works in the delta of Conscious Design, Neuroaesthetics, and Phenomenology. Currently, she's the Lab Lead at Hume, where she is developing multimodal systems that facilitate an enactive dialogue between people and space to create science-informed, aware, and responsive design. As the Director for Conscious Design Development at the Centre for Conscious Design, she is fostering extensive cross-cultural strategies for scaling pedagogical and community engagement programs that are riveted on transdisciplinary research in Architecture and Conscious Design. In life, she hopes to collate and spark advancements in the paradigm of human-space interaction to evolve experience-enriched and empathic design geared towards holistic wellbeing.

**Talk Overview:** Conscious Design is an empathic, equitable, science-informed, and data-driven process of creating spaces that are aware and responsive to needs and aspirations of its participants. I'll share ideas about engaging children's critical thinking and visuo-spatial skills through activities involving form-making, wayfinding, and storytelling through mundane objects and everyday spaces. These ideas will be instantiated as a Conscious Designer's approach to playful learning, rooted in the first principles of using space as a medium to engage children's curiosity and exploratory behaviour.

## Replicable and Low-Cost Ideas for Playful Learning

### Featured Speakers



#### Shashwath Ravisundar

A graphic designer, travel fanatic, part carnatic musician, Shashwath is a student currently studying in RV college of Architecture, Bengaluru. Shashwath believes that architecture is an interdisciplinary field which requires amalgamation of various fields, interests and would love to engage in collaborations with the same perspective. He also likes to explore architecture as an insert among various scales, from Urban policy, planning Urban design to detailing and interior design.





## Acknowledgements

We'd like to thank the William Penn Foundation for supporting this initiative. We express our gratitude to all of the speakers for their time and expertise and to Kevin Conner from the Allegheny Intermediate Unit for tech hosting the conference. Our appreciation to our Trying Together planning team including Maria Pisano, Emily Neff, and Cara Ciminillo, and to our Playful Learning Landscapes Action Network team including Doug Piper, Rachael Todaro, Ph.D., and Shelly Kessler. Without you, this couldn't have been possible. Finally, thank you to all who attended this conference and support playful learning in their communities.

The opinions expressed in this conference are those of the presenters and do not necessarily reflect the views of the William Penn foundation.