



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.

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.