

LEAD: Learn, Educate, Advocate, Do
Raise Test Scores the Right Way!
An Early Childhood Leadership Conference
October 14-15, 2010

Gesell Institute of Human Development, an independent non-profit organization located on the Yale campus, has advanced the understanding of how children grow and learn for more than half a century. In conjunction with the Institute's 60th Anniversary, an exciting one-day conference is being planned, involving world-renowned figures in child development and leaders in education reform. The conference will reintroduce and highlight the important role of child development in education, learning, and long-term school success. The Institute's long-respected history and record of sound practice and results makes it the ideal organization to move this conversation forward.

CONFERENCE RATIONALE

It is widely known that there is a crisis in education in the United States and reform is sorely needed. The Alliance for Childhood's March 2009 report *Crisis in the Kindergarten*¹, along with a variety of articles in the media including New York Times Magazine's *Kindergarten Cram*² in May and the Boston Globe's *Pressure-Cooker Kindergarten*³ in August, clearly verify the spotlight on this crisis. What is not as widely understood is that many education leaders, including school administrators, board members, government officials, and other important community stakeholders, have not had the opportunity to learn about child development, either on the job or in academic settings.

These leaders are at a disadvantage—one that has led, in part, to an over-reliance on test scores at the expense of other, more meaningful measures of success for children, as well as a lack of understanding that children age 3 to grade 3 learn differently than older children. It is a dangerous trend that has been oft overlooked—child development plays a vital role in education, and a focus on developmentally appropriate practices will actually assist in *raising test scores*.

CONFERENCE OVERVIEW

Gesell Institute's conference, to be held in New Haven, Connecticut on October 15, 2010, will be a stand-alone event expected to attract educators, psychologists, researchers, policy makers, and other important community stakeholders from around the country. The Institute's Advisory Council will meet the day before, on October 14, 2010. The Council includes world-renowned early childhood experts, educators, doctors, and academicians; this closed meeting will be followed by an evening event open to conference attendees and speakers. The dinner and program will be held in honor of Arnold Gesell, PhD, MD, and in celebration of Gesell Institute's 60th anniversary. A special guest has been invited from Washington, DC to join us as a keynote speaker – details will be announced as they unfold.

The conference is expected to draw 200-500 participants from around the country, and will include prominent keynote speakers and sessions featuring top-level panelists focusing on Practice, Play, Research, and Policy. Please refer to the Preliminary Agenda for additional details. Confirmed speakers to date include the following distinguished individuals.

- Joan Almon, *Executive Director, U.S. Alliance for Childhood*
- T. Berry Brazelton, MD, *Founder, Brazelton Touchpoints Center*
- Hon. Rosa DeLauro, *US Representative*
- Walter Gilliam, PhD, *Director, Edward Zigler Center in Child Development & Social Policy*
- Sharon Lynn Kagan, EdD, *Associate Dean for Policy, Teachers College, Columbia University*
- Linda Mayes, MD, *Gesell Professor of Child Psychiatry, Pediatrics, & Psychology, Yale Child Study*
- Dorothy Singer, PhD, *Senior Research Scientist, Department of Psychology, Yale University*
- Joshua D. Sparrow, MD, *Director, Special Initiatives, Brazelton Touchpoints Center*
- Edward Zigler, PhD, *Sterling Professor of Psychology, Emeritus, Yale University*

¹ http://www.allianceforchildhood.org/sites/allianceforchildhood.org/files/file/Kindergarten_report.pdf

² <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/05/03/magazine/03wln-ledge-t.html>

³ http://www.boston.com/news/education/higher/articles/2009/08/30/pressure_cooker_kindergarten

CONFERENCE OUTCOMES

The conference is designed to make a significant contribution to the conversation about early childhood education among superintendents, funders, legislators, and other key decision-makers. These are the very stakeholders that are often not given the information necessary to understand the critical importance of the early years in later education and life-long human development. The 2010 conference goals include widening this understanding and contributing to the national conversation about early childhood and leadership in educational policy; generating ideas for publication and dissemination to the media and the field at large; and finally, to inspire and motivate leaders toward change. Conference panels are expected to generate hands-on ideas for policy, and the Institute's real goal is long-term change—recognition that child development is critical to a successful educational system. A publication of the proceeding is expected to become required reading for policy makers across the country.

TRAVEL & ACCOMMODATIONS

New Haven is easily accessed by three neighboring airports, Tweed Airport (HVN) in New Haven; Bradley International in Hartford (BDL), a 50-minute drive north of New Haven; and Westchester County Airport in White Plains, NY (HPN), an hour drive west of New Haven. Some prefer to use a New York City airport (JFK, LGA, or EWR) and take a Metro North commuter train into New Haven.

A block of rooms has been reserved at the Omni Hotel at Yale in New Haven, CT (www.omnihotels.com) where the majority of conference events will also take place. Call 1-800-THE-OMNI and reference Gesell Institute's Conference to reserve the group rate for October 14, 2010. A total of 75 rooms have been reserved at a special rate of \$169.00. The cut-off date for reserving this rate is September 14, 2010.⁴

ABOUT YALE AND NEW HAVEN

Home to Yale University, New Haven has much to offer, from culture to history to fine dining. This quaint New England city has multiple museums, galleries, and theatre groups. With a rich history spanning more than 350 years, a broad heritage is preserved in New Haven's architecture, cuisine, and cultural events. The area's scenery is simply stunning in the fall, an excellent time to enjoy an extended weekend visit! For more information about what to do while in New Haven, see www.visitnewhaven.com.

ABOUT GESELL INSTITUTE

Gesell Institute of Human Development is a New Haven based non-profit organization that has been associated with understanding how children grow and learn since 1950. Gesell programs and publications help parents and educators understand the ages and stages of childhood. Understanding the stages of child growth and development and using this knowledge to interpret behaviors, to plan appropriate curricula, and to manage the classroom are essential to quality teaching practices.

Our mission is based not only on the work of Dr. Arnold Gesell, but also on current research and practice, broadening the Gesell philosophy of the past and bringing the work of the Institute into the 21st century. Today's Gesell Institute does not want to be known for a simple "wait a year philosophy" or merely as the proponent of a "Kindergarten readiness screener." Our new message revolves around our continued philosophy, focused on promoting the right of each child to well development.

Gesell Institute provides multiple sources of information for parents, teachers, and schools to assist them in making important decisions about children. We do not set policy or provide recommendations surrounding issues of retention, placement, or readiness "scores" in association with the Gesell Developmental Observation. We believe that parents have the right and responsibility to make informed decisions about the best available school placement for their children, and should always be given the opportunity to do so.

For more information, visit us on the web at www.gesellinstitute.org.

⁴ All special room rates are quoted net non-commissionable and are exclusive of appropriate state and local taxes, fees and assessments, currently 12% and are subject to change without notice. Reservations must be made on or before the cut off date. Reservation requests received after 5:00 PM local time at the Hotel on the Cut-off Date will be accepted on a space and rate availability basis. All group attendees will be responsible for their own room, tax and incidental charges. All reservations guaranteed to the master account and fail to arrive on scheduled arrival date will be considered No-Shows and a charge of one night's room and tax will be posted to the individual attendee's credit card on file.