



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Early Childhood Leadership Conference Aims to Help Raise Test Scores the Right Way**

**New Haven, CT, February 1, 2010** – Gesell Institute of Human Development, a non-profit organization nearing its 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary, is organizing a one-day national conference on October 15, 2010 in New Haven, CT with keynote speakers T. Berry Brazelton, MD and Joshua D. Sparrow, MD. Involving a variety of 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. “Ultimately,” says Gesell Executive Director Marcy Guddemi, “we will be discussing how to use sound theory and practice to help raise test scores the right way.”

“We know that there is a crisis in education in the United States,” continues Guddemi. “What is not as widely understood is that many leaders in education have not had the opportunity to learn about child development. 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. This is a dangerous trend that is often overlooked – child development plays a vital role in education, and a focus on developmentally appropriate practices will actually lead to increased test scores.”

The national conference will be stand-alone event expected to attract educators, psychologists, researchers, policy makers, and other important community stakeholders from around the country. Gesell 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 serve as a keynote speaker, and details about this distinguished individual will be announced as they unfold.

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The conference is expected to draw 200-500 participants, and will include prominent keynote speakers and sessions featuring top-level panelists focusing on Practice, Play, Research, and Policy. Confirmed speakers include T. Berry Brazelton, MD and Joshua D. Sparrow, MD of Brazelton Touchpoints Center; Joan Almon, Executive Director, U.S. Alliance for Childhood; Hon. Rosa DeLauro, US Representative; Sharon Lynn Kagan, EdD, Associate Dean for Policy, Teachers College, Columbia University; and Edward Zigler, PhD, Sterling Professor of Psychology, Emeritus, Yale University.

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. Conference goals include discussing the critical importance of the early years in later education and life-long human development; 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.

Gesell Institute of Human Development is an independent non-profit organization that has been associated with how children grow and learn since 1950. The work of Arnold Gesell, PhD, MD, (1888-1961), founding Director of the Yale Child Study Center in 1911 and the Institute's namesake, had a profound influence on the field child development. Based on Gesell's pioneering work documenting infant and child growth and development during the first half of the century, Gesell programs and publications help parents and educators understand the ages and stages of childhood. Professional development and parent workshops cover a broad range of topics regarding child behavior, healthy growth and development, and positive learning outcomes. Community programs help create collaborative partnerships between parents and teachers to support school success.

For additional information about Gesell Institute or to make a tax-deductible donation, visit [www.gesellinstitute.org](http://www.gesellinstitute.org). If you are a "Gesell Alumnus" who would like to take part in the historic October 2010 events, please call 1-800-369-7709 x719 or register on-line at [www.gesellinsitute.org/alumni.html](http://www.gesellinsitute.org/alumni.html). For more information about the conference or to sign up for e-mail notifications, please visit. [www.gesellinstitute.org/events.html](http://www.gesellinstitute.org/events.html).

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