



Ultimate Block Party...Supporting Children's Education through Playful Learning

Playful learning advances children's social and academic achievement in ways that enables them to build the skills needed for 21st Century success. Dubbed by the National Science Foundation as "*a radical new form of scientific outreach*," the Ultimate Block Party (UBP) engages communities in a hands-on, interactive celebration that brings the arts and sciences of playful learning to life. UBP's goal is to create awareness among families, educators, policymakers and all stakeholders about the importance of playful learning for the 3R's as well as for science, social studies, and the arts.

Established in 2009 as a 501(c)3, the UBP is led by an advisory group of prominent institutions and individuals in early learning, psychology, neuroscience, publishing, and family and work issues. The initial UBP events were held in three cities, NYC, Baltimore and Toronto, with over 100,000 participants and over one million people informed about these events. Two foundational principles make the UBP truly unique. First, each activity is derived from a "nugget" of science - some discovery from research that shows how learning takes place. Second, the UBP also reflects those skills deemed to be crucial for children's success in a 21st century world and work force.

The UBP is continuing its objective to build a strong infrastructure to increase the public's understanding of playful learning and to expand UBP's reach. The statistics are staggering. Real learning takes place through play and the arts. Yet, this kind of informal learning is under siege. In the last two decades, children have lost an average of 8 hours of free play a week. The American Academy of Pediatrics calls the decline of playtime a national crisis. UBP wants to expand playful learning opportunities for children to support cradle-to-career success. Engaging families, educators, and advocates about the importance of fostering lifelong learning through playful learning experiences is a crucial objective.

UBP has recently partnered with the Association of Children's Museums (ACM) in this endeavor. ACM's membership represents more than 300 museums around the world, which serve approximately 31 million visitors each year. ACM and its member museums are committed to playful learning and children's healthy development. An Ultimate Block Party was held on May, 2016 at Stepping Stones Children's Museum in Norwalk, CT. Thousands of families participated in a variety of engaging activities that focused on hands-on science-based learning. Children explored the world through the exhibits and programs informed by education standards and child development research.

In sum, the purpose of the UBP and its partnership with ACM is to:

1. Facilitate community events across the United States for families around playful learning;
2. Launch a national, regional and local communications platform to convey the latest playful learning research to families and practitioners; and
3. Create a bridge between child development researchers and children's museum practitioners that demonstrates how to put the research on children's learning into everyday practice.

While every UBP is unique to each community, there are several core components. The components are:

1. Seven core Learning Activity Centers ranging from adventure play to literacy play with activities that translate learning science into practice;
2. Main Stage activities that bring everyone together to experience playful learning;
3. Experts and researchers in the science of learning called "Play Doctors" who walk the event answering questions and engaging participants in conversations about the benefits of play;
4. Authors Corner featuring book signings from children's book authors and researchers to help participants expand their learning beyond the event; and
5. A robust community outreach through local and social media, the UBP website, and communication resources.

The UBP is committed to working towards affecting education delivery – both in and out of school -- and the disconnect between what we know about learning and how we teach.

Visit UBP at www.ultimateblockparty.com