



Ultimate Block Party (UBP) and Association of Children's Museums (ACM) Everything You Need to Know

What is UBP?

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.

Established in 2009 as a 501(c3), the UBP is led by an advisory group of prominent institutions and individuals in early learning, psychology, neuroscience, play, publishing, and family and work issues.

What is the mission of the UBP?

The mission of the UBP is to create awareness and build the infrastructure to inform families, educators, policymakers and all stakeholders around the importance of play in learning science, arts, math and more.

Where have there been UBP Events?

The initial UBP events were held in four cities, NYC (2010), Baltimore (2011), Boston (2015) and Toronto (2011), with over 100,000 participants. In 2016, the UBP, in conjunction with the Association of Children's Museums, held an Ultimate Block Party at the 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 theory.

What is the relationship with the Association of Children's Museums (ACM)?

UBP partnered with ACM in 2016. ACM's members include more than 300 museums with 31 million visitors each year. ACM and its member museums are committed to individualized learning through play and children's healthy development.

Why are ACM and UBP working together?

ACM and UBP are working together to expand playful learning opportunities for children to support cradle to career success as well as to engage families, educators, and advocates about the importance of fostering lifelong learning through playful learning experiences. Future partnership activities include strengthening professional development opportunities with children's museums and the researchers involved in UBP.

Why should a children's museum host a local UBP event?

Local UBPs engage, inform, and inspire families, educators, child-service providers while showcasing the extraordinary institutions, individuals, and resources in each community. Collectively we can create greater impact and everyday learning 365 days a year while raising national awareness of the importance of playful learning. Think about the Ultimate Block Party as igniting the passion that is in all of us to play, explore, create and grow and learn.

What are the goals for an UBP event?

A UBP event is designed to:

- Be the advocate for play and its importance in healthy child development and education
- Raise awareness of core scientific findings related to the positive impact play based activities have on healthy development and skill based outcomes
- Create information rich communications and outreach through the media, web portals, interactive websites brochures and pre-and-post event workshops
- Activate demonstrable change in lifestyle and play patterns

How does a typical UBP work?

UBPs are community events that include local and national sponsors, early learning organizations, families, and other stakeholders. The event is held in an afternoon at local venue such as a children's museum. The event includes the hands-on activities, main stage whole group events, book-signings and more. Every UBP event fosters a family-oriented platform to inform attitudes and behaviors in literacy, math, science and learning.

What are the core components of every UBP?

Each UBP is unique to the community its serves. There are, however, several core components that make a UBP event successful. Each facet of the design, planning and execution of the event has been carefully studied, considered and executed. 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.

What are the seven core learning activity centers?

Engaging children in learning through play and the arts is an integral part of how children learn. Research shows that playful learning provides an opportunity to build essential skills for success in school and in life. Every activity is based in the arts and science of learning and should be supported by published science. Each UBP demonstrates seven core types of hands-on play. The activities created by UBP sponsors should fall into these categories:

1. Adventure Play – Children are naturally curious. Games and activities such as Hide and Seek, I Spy and treasure hunts help children develop an understanding of the world around them building by skills such as inquiry, prediction, critical thinking and more.
2. Dramatic Play – Social skills are learned through dramatic play as children practice role-playing events in their lives. They learn to control behavior, express emotions, and figure out ways to respond. This is called "self-regulation" and helps children develop persistence, master tasks, cooperate with others and make ethical choices.
3. Construction Play – Building and testing new structures gives children a chance to learn engineering skills, mathematics, collaboration and creativity.
4. Creative Play - Children love to create art, music, sculptures, games, and songs. These essential activities help children become innovators and independent thinkers.

5. Physical Play – Moving, jumping, and skipping are all great for children’s bodies and minds. In physical play children also learn to follow rules, listen to directions, and develop attention skills. Children develop self-control during physical play, a skill that is critical to success in school.
6. Music and Dance Play - Music is a language all its own and helps children to express themselves and learn about other cultures. Learning songs and dancing to a beat is not only good exercise but helps teach basic math, language and physical skills.
7. Tech Play – Children specialize in “why” and “how” questions. “Why did my ice cream melt?” “How does it snow?” Children are natural-born scientists who conduct experiments every day. This is where the role of technology comes in. When children question they are improving their powers of observation, reasoning, and prediction while generating excitement about science.

Where to do the ideas for the activities come from?

ACM and UBP have provided interactive, science–based activity ideas (see attached list). Activities can be presented by the host museum. Museums and other partners can develop their own activity ideas based upon their mission and experiences with young children. Low-cost activities are welcome. UBP is designed to show parents that inexpensive materials, often put in the trash bin, can make wonderful learning opportunities for children. Supplies such as cardboard boxes, tubes, ribbons, newspaper etc. fall into this category.

How many activities centers should there be?

There should be at least one activity for each of the seven Learning Activity Centers described above. An ideal UBP event has at least two activities in each Learning Activity Center, for a total of fourteen activities.

What typically happens on “Main Stage” events?

Main Stage events are designed to bring all participants at the UBP together in fun ways. Possible Main Stage activities include Simon Says, musical trivia, sing-alongs, dance parties, and more. The Main Stage also provides an opportunity for the hosts and presenters to welcome the families and inform them of the events throughout the day.

How do attendees make the connections between play and learning?

All event signage and messaging needs to use lay language to help connect the UBP activities to playful learning and early childhood development. Importantly, parents and caregivers must understand that play and its role in learning is supported by published science. Attendees should receive a copy of the Playbook, which is both a guide to the event and an at-home resource for attendees.

What is the Playbook, and what does it include?

The Playbook orients event attendees while connecting science with playful learning. The Playbook shares the science behind each Learning Activity Center using language that parents easily can understand. The Playbook also includes activities to continue the learning at home and resources to learn more about the research behind playful learning. Children’s museums also can recognize local and national partners in the Playbook. A customizable template is included in the toolkit.

What is a Play Doctor?

Play Doctors act as local representatives from the science and education communities to help event attendees understand the concepts presented in the activities. Dressed in white lab coats, Play Doctors walk through the event talking with families about the connection between

play and learning. The Play Doctors come from children's museum staff, local universities and colleges, educational organizations, and other local nonprofits.

How does the book-signing work?

This activity, called Authors' Corner, is optional but highly recommended. The authors of parenting books and children's books are present to sign books, talk to parents about play and literacy, and read experts to the children.

What is a typical UBP schedule?

Most of the past UBPs have run from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. with activities scheduled as follows:

- Main Stage events usually start at 11:30 and run periodically throughout the day until 5 pm. Allow 15-30 minutes for Main Stage activities and performances. Be sure to allow 15-minute breaks between Main Stage activities so that there is time to switch out events. A final Main Stage activity should close the UBP from 4:30-5 p.m.
- Learning Activity Centers should open at 11:30 a.m. to provide time for the grand opening at the Main Stage. Ideally, each activity will be continuously available until 4 p.m.
- The Authors' Corner usually is open for a limited time based on author availability. Each author typically participates for 30 minutes.
- Play Doctors rotate throughout the Learning Activity Centers throughout the day.

Can a UBP be customized for a particular community?

Although there are common procedures and guidelines for hosting an Ultimate Block Party, each event is different. Each children's museum can customize its event to reflect the local community's culture and community and to celebrate its children--and their play and learning--with their unique flavor. The most important component is sharing the science behind play and its importance to children's healthy growth and development with parents, caregivers, educators, and other stakeholders who attend the event. .

What resources does ACM and UBP provide to support a local city event?

ACM and UBP have produced a toolkit with the following materials to support events hosted by children's museums:

- How to set up your event (e.g., what to include, a typical schedule, insurance, rain plans, licensing, filming permissions, crowd planning etc.)
- Activity Planning Guide, including a guide to the Learning Activity Centers, approved activities, and an activity approval form
- Playbook template
- Visual Asset Guide, including use of ACM and UBP logos and recognition of national sponsors
- Media kit, including sample press release and social media postings
- Promotional templates for print and web publication
- Play Doctor guide

Who is the local UBP team?

The children's museum leads event development and can include other community organizations as appropriate for its community. Other potential partners include:

- Local government to optimize all that the community has to offer in terms of resources, distribution networks, communications vehicles, etc.

- Local universities, youth organizations, community and parent organizations, to participate in the development of the event and serve as volunteers.
- Media partners to help spread the word and participate in the event.
- Local sponsors to provide funds to support the event.

Explain the use of volunteers.

Volunteers come from the supporting organizations listed above. The volunteers usually come from the supporting Children's Museum, the local colleges and universities, employees of the activity sponsors and educational organizations. It is important to have a volunteer meeting prior to the event with a complete list of roles and responsibilities, a schedule and volunteer t-shirts. Volunteers must be trained and well informed so that they can help deliver key messages to parents about the importance of play and playful learning to children's development and achievement. A volunteer guide is available.

How do sponsors participate in the UBP?

Sponsors can do a number of things to showcase their organization's commitment to early learning and the importance of play. They can provide:

- Funds for event promotions
- Main Stage event activities
- Activities for the Learning Activity Centers

There are several levels of sponsorships with varying benefits to the sponsor such as logo on signage and the website. Signage from companies is to be kept small and unobtrusive for in the activity areas keeping the focus on play and playful learning and not on product.

Can things be sold to raise funds at the UBP?

Events should be non-commercial, with a focus on play. Toys and merchandise should not be for sale at the event.

How to get started in planning a UBP?

Contact the ACM and UBP team through the UBP website (www.ultimateblockparty.com).

Complete the Contact Us form and we will get back to you immediately to help you begin your successful UBP right away!