



Early Learning and Development: It's All About the Relationships

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Still Face Experiment - Ed Tronick

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=apzXGEbZht0>

Development occurs within the context of relationships.

- Everyday experiences shape early learning.
- Infant/Toddler goals:
 - State regulation leading to self soothing and self control
 - Development of trust with caregiver leading to ability to separate and explore environment
 - Sense of self and autonomy
 - Understanding social rules and empathy
- Match-Mismatch-Repair (Ed Tronick)
 - It's through the process of reparation that we learn how to communicate and gain a sense of self.



The Importance of Play

- Rochester Strong Museum of Play www.thestrong.org
 - *American Journal of Play* – free online journal through the website
 - *The power of play: Learning what comes naturally* (2008) by Elkind
 - *The function of play in the development of the social brain* (2010) Pellis, Pellis & Bell
 - *How the brain makes play fun* (2010) Vanderschuren



Pointing & Early Literacy Development

- Gestures pave the way for early sentences with greater complexity
 - Child points at cup; caregiver responds “cup”
 - Child says “eat” + points to a cookie; caregiver provides a label “cookie”
 - Evolves into “eat cookie”
- Pointing is a stepping stone to learning language
- When children do not have a model for language, they use gestures to fill the void.
- When children have a model for language, they use gestures to advance the language that is present.



Source: Goldin-Meadow (2007)



“No significant learning occurs without a significant relationship.”

-Victoria Dillon

Vocabulary and Early Literacy

The 30 million word gap:

“By age 3, children from well-to-do families have a working vocabulary of 1,116 words, compared to 749 words for children in working-class families and 525 words for children on welfare.”

-Hart and Risley, 2003

**If you haven't heard the words,
you can't speak or understand the words.**

The Good News Is...



**quality early
childhood
programs make a
difference!**

How Young Children Learn

- Early Childhood defined as birth to age 8 years
- During this period young children learn in different ways than older children
- Learn through physically interacting with environment- both people and things
- Use all senses
- Build new knowledge based on old knowledge- "stair-steps analogy"
- Learn primarily through play
- Learn best in an environment that is developmentally appropriate



DAP vs DI

DAP schools

- Have active learners
- More playful learning (guided play)
- Whole child approach
- Integrated and Intentional curricula
- Discoverer/Explorer

DI (Direct Instruction)

- More passive learners
- Learning is more compartmentalized
- Empty vessel metaphor



Executive Function

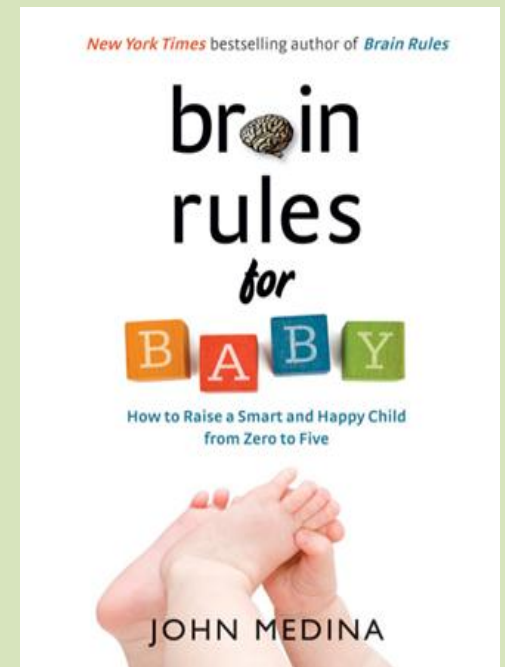
- [In Brief: Executive Function: Skills for Life and Learning](#)

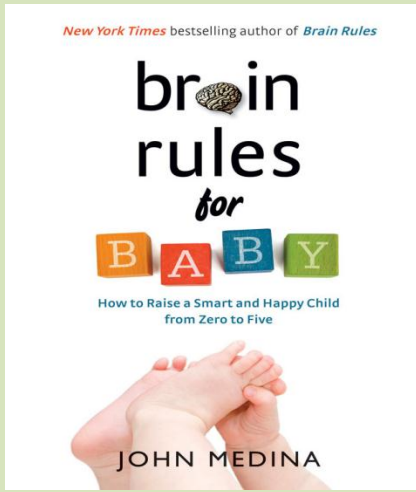
According to a recent study...

Diamond, Barnett, Thomas & Munro, *Science*, 2007

- Using *Tools of the Mind* helped children develop executive function (EF) skills; eg. Inhibitory control, working memory and cognitive flexibility
- EF skills highly correlated with positive outcomes in math and reading
- With playful learning *throughout the day*, standardized tests scores increase-even for children living in poverty

Let's think about what
research has found...





What do YOU think is the BEST choice? (Medina, 2010 found at www.brainrules.net)

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- a. IQ
- b. Self-control
- c. Grades

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- a. A stimulating environment
- b. Teachers with exceptional “theory of mind” (relational) skills
- c. A feeling of safety.

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- b. Showing that you care creates an environment of safety, the brain's No 1 concern.
- c. The child knows he is misbehaving, and an empathetic reaction surprises him, refocusing his attention.

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So what does this tell us?...

Attention to relationships, and knowledge of child development must drive what we do in the early childhood environment!



Building Adult Capabilities to Improve Child Outcomes: A Theory of Change

- [Building Adult Capabilities to Improve Child Outcomes: A Theory of Change](#)

Where do go from here?

Questions or comments...

