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Gesell Directors Speaking to Thousands at Annual NAEYC Conference

New Haven, CT (November 4, 2010) – This week the Gesell Institute of Human Development has been out in Anaheim, California for the annual National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) Conference & Expo, which is the largest gathering of early childhood educators and administrators in the world. Gesell Institute is one of a thousand vendors located in the Exhibit Hall. The Institute will be promoting its newly released Gesell Developmental Observation – Revised (GDO-R) assessment tool, and the results of their latest study.

Last month on October 14th Gesell Institute hosted a press conference in New Haven, CT. The Mayor of New Haven, John DeStefano, proclaimed that day as *Gesell Institute Leadership and Discovery Day*. Mayor DeStefano congratulated the Institute on their newsworthy anniversary and commended the establishment on its positive influence on understanding child development for the past 60 years. At the press conference, Gesell Institute’s Executive Director, Dr. Marcy Guddemi, formally announced the results of their three year study, which shows conflict against the current push-down academic philosophy that exists in our nation’s schools, especially in Kindergarten. Media such as the *New York Times*, *The Boston Globe*, and *USA Today* have noticed this trend too, and have recently published related articles. With playtime and recess being eliminated from schools in exchange for more tests and desk work, children are being denied the ability to engage and expand their social skills and relationships, which not all educators realize. The National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) agrees and has recently proposed that elementary principals be required to obtain further professional development in the areas of child development and early learning, which Gesell Institute can offer through their programs, publications, seminars, webinars and workshops.

Gesell Institute’s national study on children’s development drew a nationwide sample of about 1300 3-6 year olds from 53 schools in 23 states from all demographics and economic backgrounds. One of the many points the data confirmed was that the large majority of children cannot draw diagonal lines into a triangle before the age of 5 ½, which is the precursor for writing the letter A, for example. The Institute’s study results are consistent with Dr. Arnold Gesell’s results of children at that same age in the 1940’s. However, the unchanging pace of developmental growth in children is being ignored by the educational curriculum that is intended to support it. “If this task can be performed at 5 ½ years of age, then it is pointless to try to speed up the pace of a child’s development by purposefully giving a 3 or 4 year old letter and number tasks instead of letting them play,” claims Guddemi. The Institute found this same data trend in PreK and Kindergarten classrooms across the country. Unfortunately, in an effort to close achievement gaps, both schools and parents endorse the “earlier is better myth,” believing that by “learning” academic skills earlier, developmental success will follow. **Gesell’s data proves the opposite - that developmental abilities must emerge before an academic curriculum has**

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meaning for the child and that it stimulates a corresponding motivation to learn. To learn more about the press conference and Gesell's latest study please visit:

<http://www.gesellinstitute.org/pdf/GesellPressConferenceResultsRelease.pdf>

On the heels of the Institute's national early childhood LEAD (Learn, Educate, Advocate, Do!) Conference last month, Dr. Guddemi and the Director of Gesell Institute's Parent-Teacher Connection Program, Marina Pappas, will both be speaking at the NAEYC Conference on Friday, November 5th. Dr. Guddemi will be speaking in the Grand Ballroom of the Anaheim Marriot Hotel. Her presentation, "*The Role of Play in the Overly Academic Kindergarten and Preschool: What Can We Do?*" is based in curriculum theory and will focus on how recess and playtime within schools have been dismissed in exchange for more deskwork and tests. This idea negates the United Nation's Convention on the Rights of the Child. Children develop intellectually through their experience with play. However, in classrooms across the nation, children's social and problem-solving skills such as persistence, creativity, cooperation, and communication, all of which are necessary in the adult job market, are not being fully developed. Dr. Guddemi will explain how this is linked to America's current push-down curriculum methodology. Tasks that were originally assigned in college, now exist in High School (i.e., AP courses), and a High School prospectus can now be seen in Middle School. This trickle-down theory has made its way into the classrooms of our country's youngest learners. Kindergarteners are now being asked to perform the same writing tasks of First Graders, which Gesell Institute found to be an unproductive philosophy through their latest study.

In a more intimate setting, Marina Pappas will be educating conference guests about Gesell Institute's Parent-Teacher Connection Program (P-TCP) in the Expo's Learning Galleria, which interacts with attendees through smaller group seminar sessions or on a one-on-one basis. Gesell's P-TCP promotes school success by creating positive and productive partnerships between families and teachers; it educates families about early childhood development; and personalizes a child's preschool education. By providing individualized attention to families, children and their teachers, the program aims to close the quality gap in early learning at home and at school to produce measurable and lasting results. Program Liaisons evaluate a child using Gesell Institute's Early Screener, which helps assess a child's language, numeracy, social, emotional, and motor skills. The P-TCP can track each child's progress across all areas of development. To learn more about this program, please visit www.gesellinstitute.org/pctp.html.

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 of 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. The Institute's community programs help create collaborative partnerships between parents and teachers to support school success. To learn more about the organization, its programs and products, please visit www.gesellinstitute.org. Find and follow Gesell Institute on Twitter, Facebook and YouTube.

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