



GESELL INSTITUTE
OF CHILD DEVELOPMENT

2012-2013

Annual Report



Board Chair's Message 2013

I have had an exciting first year as President of the Board of Directors for Gesell Institute. There are many reasons to be proud of the Institute, which has been serving educators, parents, and clinicians for over 60 years. We continue to stand as a beacon of light with regards to using the theory of child development when making decisions that affect the lives of children. This is particularly important as most states in the nation are adopting Common Core State Standards, and public elementary schools are integrating early childhood programs into their buildings. Gesell has the unique capacity to provide guidance based on its long track record, combined with its recent research, which validates the renowned Gesell assessment and its positions on early childhood education.

This year, Gesell Institute has continued to enjoy an international, national, and local presence in its advocacy for young children, and its expertise in using child development knowledge in the classroom. On the international level, the perennially popular ten-book series written by Louise Bates Ames and Frances Ilg—"Your One-Year-Old" etc., was translated into Mandarin. On the national level, Gesell's National Lecture Staff (NLS) delivered 30 Gesell Developmental Observation-Revised (GDO-R) training workshops. I am most excited about the distribution of 20,000 *Community Early Childhood LEADership E-Kits* through *Principal* magazine (see page 6).

Gesell's E-Kit is now on the desks of 20,000 principals in the United States, Canada, and overseas! Furthermore, we distributed an additional few thousand E-Kits to other teachers, parents and state education department leaders across the country.

For all of these reasons, as well as for the noble history of Gesell Institute, I am honored and humbled to chair Gesell's Board of Directors. I am optimistic about the coming year, and look forward to continued success in being the voice of reason in the local, national, and international discussion about what is best for young children—who are our future.

~ Barbara M. Stern

Executive Director's Message 2013

There was a wise man from Yale's Ivory tower
whose research found children develop like a flower
with love and respect
Not electronics and high tech
So teach to the child and not to the "testing hour!"

After six years at Gesell Institute, and with the impending implementation of the Common Core State Standards, I am more committed than ever to promoting the principles of child development. Legislators and administrators forgot the child in No Child Left Behind. Let's remember common sense in implementing the Common Core. We need to respect the individual differences in the development of each child, instead of "teaching to the test."

I am thrilled about the Institute's accomplishments in 2013. Undoubtedly, the biggest impact that we had was the wide distribution of the Community Early Childhood LEADership E-Kits. The LEAD in LEADership means Learn, Educate, Advocate, and Do! The E-Kit does each of these. But Do! is the most important. So we did and are doing! (Remember the E-Kits are free - visit www.geselle-kit.org!)

Thank you to my enthusiastic local staff, dedicated National Lecture Staff, and a supporting Board of Directors who believe as I do. Together, we can make a difference!

~ Marcy Guddemi, PhD, MBA



Our mission is to promote
the principles of child
development as the basis
for all decision making
for young children.

S P R E A D I N G the Gesell Word

This past year Dr. Guddemi wrote and submitted four research articles regarding the re-norming of the GDO-R assessment and the importance of play. Co-collaborators and authors included Dr. Kathleen Fite from Texas State University; Bruce Randel from Century Analytics; and Andrea Sambrook, Gitta Selva, and Sallie Wells from Gesell Institute, respectively. These articles were submitted to HighScope, IPA/USA Quarterly, SEEN Magazine and Sage Publications.

Unrealistic Kindergarten Expectations: Findings from Gesell Institute's Revalidated Developmental Assessment Instrument and **Arnold Gesell's Developmental Assessment Revalidation Substantiates Child-Oriented Curriculum** reiterate the facts and findings of the Institute's 2010 GDO Study. The study concluded that mastery of the GDO items does not necessarily develop at the same rate for all children of the same age, but all can perform more difficult tasks of the GDO as they chronologically grow older. Dr. Guddemi believes in the importance of establishing effective and appropriate academic goals based on a child GDO assessment results. "It is essential that educators, policy makers, and parents understand the significance of child development when setting standards and planning appropriate curriculum (content



and instructional strategy) for children. By using robust observational methods, coupled with comprehensive developmental assessment tools, such as the GDO, educators can plan curriculum that respects the developmental level and potential of the child."

Linking Self-Regulation, Pretend Play and Learning in Young Children and **Where Is The Play?** articles focused on the academic benefits of imaginary play activities. However, play is often discouraged in today's classrooms because schools think higher test scores come from implementing more rigorous curriculums. The authors addressed that pretend play is linked to numerous other outcomes such as increased language and communication skills, creativity, collaboration skills and problem solving skills. In addition, children become more engaged, persistent, self-directed learners as a result. There are different types of play schools should apply; i.e., constructive play develops mathematical skills, creative play helps children discover science and nature, and physical play increases motor skills and healthy bodies. Dramatic play, however, is the highest form of play. It is essential in the development of a child's brain and can even expand their vocabulary.

Year in Review

We have had a momentous year at Gesell Institute!

Educators continue to have a great interest in our developmental assessment tool, the GDO-R. We had 30 schools host GDO-R training workshops across the country. This included our annual workshop event held at the Institute on Yale University's campus. We also organized a networking breakfast at the Yale Child Study Center for the region's pediatricians and child psychologists to educate them about the renowned assessment.

Gesell Institute continues to make a strong name for itself on both a local and national scale. We maintain a productive relationship with the city of New Haven. Gesell's staff and Board members participate in the New Haven Chamber of Commerce, CT Association of Nonprofits, and Dr. Marcy Guddemi, the Institute's Executive Director, serves on the New Haven Early Childhood Council (NHECC). We also conducted the Parent-Teacher Connection Program for the New Haven Public Schools' Head Start Program.

Over this past year, Dr. Guddemi and Gesell Institute were prominently featured on the public stage. Dr. Guddemi presented at The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) Annual Conference and Expo in Atlanta, GA; CTAEYC in Connecticut and CAEYC in California; The Association for Childhood Education International (ACEI) Conference in Washington, DC; Together We Will: Learn To Play and Play to Learn Conference in Connecticut;

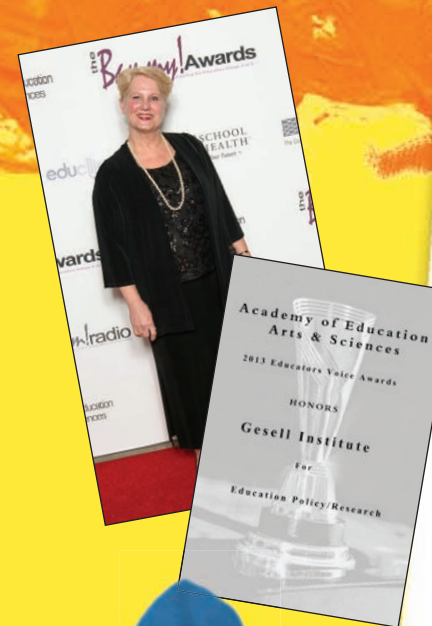
cut; the 92Y Wonderplay Conference in New York City; and the Conference for Early Childhood Research and Evaluation at HighScope's Center for Early Education Evaluation (CEEE) in Michigan.

Earlier this year at the 26th Annual American Association for the Child's Right to Play Conference, hosted by IPA/USA in Washington, DC, Guddemi received the *Dr. of Play Award*, "in honor of her dedicated service."

In May, Gesell Institute was a sponsor for Ed Miller's "The Child's Right to Play" presentation in New Haven. Dr. Guddemi also spoke at the event and distributed the *Community Early Childhood LEADership E-Kit* (see page 6) to attendees. Gesell Institute and Ed Miller are collaborating on a research study in 2014 on the recent implementation of the Common Core throughout Kindergarten classrooms across the country.

In regards to Gesell Institute's research on child development, philosophy and advocacy for play, the Institute was quoted this year in the *New Haven Register*, *Atlanta Black Star*, *Charlotte Observer* and in *Parenting Magazine*. Furthermore, Gesell research articles were published in Proceedings from the First Annual Conference for Early Childhood Research and Evaluation, Center for Early Education Evaluation at HighScope in Ypsilanti, MI; *SEEN* (SouthEast Education Network) *Magazine*; and the IPA/USA Quarterly peer-reviewed e-journal (see page 3). We were also delighted to have a complimentary print advertisement placed in *USA TODAY* as part of their Nonprofit Charity Spotlight Program.

The 2012-2013 year also introduced new products and webinars to the Institute's catalog. Erin Akers, a member of the National Lecture Staff, hosted our first "Common Sense for the Common Core" webinar. It focused on educating teachers who have 4-6 year-olds transitioning into Kindergarten. "Why do we currently have Common Core State Standards?" and "How to maintain a developmentally appropriate classroom while trying to uphold these new standards?" were questions that Erin addressed. Dr. Guddemi hosted, "Linking Self-Regulation, Pretend Play and Learning in Young Children: Important New Findings." Scientific evidence that links learning with executive functioning was shared by Guddemi in this webinar. Viewers also learned about the benefits of mature, sustained pretend play, and how parents and teachers can currently advocate for more play in the classroom.



Gesell Institute Receives 2013 Educators Voice Award

In July, the Academy of Education Arts and Sciences presented Gesell Institute with the 2013 Educators Voice Award, in the category of Education Policy/Research. Gesell Institute has now been inducted into the Academy's Council of Peers.

Honorees were determined by a popular vote within the education community. Online voting took place throughout April and May. Over 350 educational administrators, teachers, advocacy programs, and organizations were nominated by their peers across 31 different categories.

"Winning the Educators Voice Award is very special," said Dr. Guddemi, Executive Director of Gesell Institute. "It proves that our organization is respected by the Academy, and amongst our peers." Gesell Institute was nominated in the Policy/Research category because of its recent nationwide study of over 1,300 three-to-six-year-old children. The Institute's data proved that children today are still progressing through major developmental milestones at the same rate as when Dr. Arnold Gesell analyzed the same age group and recorded his research over 100 years ago. "Our study and results are particularly important because more and more schools are adopting rigorous standards for academic expectations, especially in Kindergarten, as if children were developing faster today. They are not!" added Guddemi.

Dr. Guddemi accepted the award on behalf of the Institute at a presentation ceremony on September 21, 2013 in Washington, D.C.

The National Lecture Staff of Gesell Institute

The National Lecture Staff (NLS) is an integral part of Gesell Institute. We are a dedicated group of professionals who conduct parent meetings, professional development seminars for schools, and most importantly, the GDO-R workshops (a 3-day training that is required to administer the GDO-R assessment).

Highlights of the Year

The NLS has strengthened its professional development offerings this year to include online webinars and on-site presentations. Many of the presentations were tailored for the needs of the individual schools we visited. The webinar series targeted early childhood centers/preschools and elementary teachers who wanted to expand their knowledge on the various stages of development for young learners. They also acquired needed professional development hours. Our most popular webinars consisted of a four-part series focused on the 3-, 4-, and 5-year-old child, and questions and concerns that arise when transitioning into Kindergarten.

The NLS was very involved in NAEYC in 2013. Many presented at their local AEYC conferences, as well as at other affiliated professional events. Topics included Ages and Stages of Development, Common Sense for the Common Core, and current research linking Developmental Age to Literacy and Reading. The NLS is a very active, experienced group of educational professionals who work hard advocating for young children across the nation every day.



Looking to 2014

NLS Director, Sally Keller, would like to invite you to consider joining our team of Lecture Staff members. This process begins by attending a GDO-R workshop and gaining experience in administering the GDO-R. If you are interested, please email Sally at sally@gesellinstitute.org. Sign up for one of our workshops today!

— Sally Keller, MAT

New Classroom Activities Mobile App for the iPad

Earlier this year, Gesell Institute partnered with SchoolChapters® to launch an educational mobile App. It assists early childhood educators and parents in providing developmentally appropriate activities and experiences to children, based on content created by Gesell Institute. The App is available in the iTunes App Store and currently is only accessible on the iPad.



Gesell Experiences by SchoolChapters® offers adults hundreds of activities that span multiple learning domains, and can correlate with assigned curriculums. Users can download the App at no charge, and then select bundles of Gesell activities based on their desired learning domains. To date, seven bundles are available at 99 cents per bundle, each containing ten experiences. Customer feedback has been positive.

"This venture further solidifies that Gesell Institute is a valued early childhood resource and advocacy organization. We are proud to enter into the realm of new age technology," stated Dr. Marcy Guddemi. "Teachers are busy people, and searching for developmentally appropriate activities for the classroom in multiple domains takes time. This App is designed to help teachers and parents help the child, while using up-to-date technology!"

How the GDO Places Children in the Correct Grade



Is Your Child Ready For School: Finding The Best Grade Placement was added to Gesell's catalog in summer 2013. Author Judith Davis Kuhn, a Kindergarten and First Grade teacher for over 40 years, shares her experience of how the Gesell Developmental Observation (GDO) assessment helped her give advice to parents on the appropriate grade placement for their children. Without the GDO, she feels there would have been many lost children who otherwise would have struggled academically being placed in the wrong class. "My love for children fueled a desire to write this book, and I am hoping parents will gain insight from my concrete examples as they make decisions regarding when their children should start school," observes Kuhn. Parents are encouraged to read this book if they have a child transitioning between PreK and Kindergarten, or into another elementary school grade. Educators may use this reference in addition to the *Ready or Not: Is My Child Ready for Kindergarten?* booklet, and *Ready For Kindergarten* professional development DVD Gesell Institute also sells. All materials can be found in the online at www.bookstore.gesellinstitute.org.

Gesell Institute Partners with National Association of Elementary School Principals

In summer 2013, Gesell Institute partnered with The National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP). NAESP is an internationally recognized organization that has supported principals and education leaders since 1921. As a result of this collaboration, the September/October 2013 back-to-school issue of *Principal* magazine included Gesell Institute's timely *Community Early Childhood LEADership E-Kit*. The magazine publication is mailed to all 20,000 NAESP members.

This partnership takes place in light of the implementation of Common Core State Standards in K-12 schools across the country. "There must be common sense to the Common Core!" stated Dr. Marcy Guddemi. "Our latest research," elaborated Guddemi, "shows that children are not reaching developmental milestones any faster than previous generations. Respecting the variations of development from child to child is more important than ever. The right way to raise test scores is by placing quality leadership in early childhood programs for children preK to Grade 3."

NAESP's 2013 Annual Conference took place in Baltimore, MD, in July. During the Opening Session, Arne Duncan (U.S. Secretary of Education) addressed principal leadership and early learning. "Unfortunately, many principal prepa-

ration programs and school systems currently lack sufficient training to teach principals how to design and lead quality early childhood programs. To reverse this trend, new policies in the ESEA reauthorization must include program strategies to create comprehensive early childhood programs." NAESP is actively supporting a P-3 policy and practice agenda, and Gesell Institute's E-Kit is ideal for advancing proper instructional leadership in this area. "When policy makers and school leaders don't have access to the latest research about how children learn, they can make mistakes that actually keep down the very test scores they are trying to enhance," said Guddemi.

Gesell Institute's E-Kit CD-ROM is an interactive compilation of multi-media resources designed for school leaders, as well as teachers, parents and policy makers. The E-Kit provides tools that help principals begin their own "call-to-action" community conversations about educational reform, quality early childhood programs, and best practices based on research. The distribution of the E-Kit to NAESP members was made possible by a generous grant from ConEdison in New York City. The E-Kit is also available online at www.geselle-kit.org.



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We need your support – now more than ever!

Even a small donation will aid our efforts to expand programs and publications. If you would like to join others in contributing to our important work, please contact us at:

1-800-369-7709

www.gesellinstitute.org

Pledge your support today.

Please visit us online to make a donation. Or mail your tax-deductible contribution, payable to:

Gesell Institute, 310 Prospect Street, New Haven, CT 06511

Thank you!

Take Action: Help Support Children and Families!

Our work is focused on educating and supporting teachers and parents both locally and across the country, in order to ensure the future success of all children. We promote the principles of child development as the basis for all decision making so that children may be nurtured, encouraged, and empowered as they grow and learn. After 60+ years, Gesell Institute remains committed to its mission. However, as a nonprofit, it can be challenging to achieve our goals each year.