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First-of-its-Kind Resource for Scholarly Research about Benefits and Effects of Free Play

National Institute for Play Launches IPEMA-Supported Encyclopedia of Play Science

HARRISBURG, Pa., July 17, 2013 – [The National Institute for Play](#), with support from the [International Play Equipment Manufacturers Association](#) (IPEMA) has published the first round of academic research surrounding the benefits of free play on the newly-created [Encyclopedia of Play Science](#). The Encyclopedia establishes the field of play science and is free and open to the public, providing valuable resources for those interested in the science behind the free play movement. Free play is the state in which children combine creative, imaginative and social play in an unstructured environment as in nature or at a local playground.

“We’re extremely gratified to see this important project coming to fruition,” said Randy Watermiller, IPEMA President. “Those of us in the playground industry know how critical play is to child development – we hope this resource will help us further reinforce to the general public how truly important it is to prioritize play.”

The Encyclopedia is live on Scholarpedia, a wiki-based online encyclopedia housing peer-reviewed academic articles. It is the first-known database of scientific, academic research that demonstrates the scientifically proven benefits of play.

“The purpose of the Encyclopedia is to, through the prodigious scholarship of multidisciplinary play experts, define the boundaries of Play Science. This compendium of new information provides researchers, policy makers and the public the ability to effectively implement the credible benefits that are inherent in our intricate play natures,” said Dr. Stuart Brown, founder of the National Institute for Play, the organization behind the Encyclopedia.

Research Reinforces Proven Benefits of Play

Per Scholarpedia’s policy, all articles listed on the Encyclopedia have been peer reviewed by at least two editors prior to publication. Currently, 11 articles have been published, with six more in development, ranging in subject matter from:

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International Play Equipment Manufacturers Association (IPEMA) – Voice of Play

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- **Technology and Play** – reveals the integration of technology and play, as well as both benefits and critiques of play with technology and ways to promote learning via technology
- **ADHD and Play** – focuses on how long-term provision of more opportunities for physical play may be an effective, non-medicinal therapy for reducing some of the disruptive behaviors of ADHD and facilitating brain development in children diagnosed with ADHD
- **Evolution of American Playgrounds** – learn more about the evolution of American playgrounds beginning in the 19th century, including influences of European innovations on the gestalt of modern American playgrounds
- **The Benefits of Recess in Primary School** – reviews empirical research surrounding the benefits of recess for primary school children and argues against the current trend of reducing or eliminating recess
- **Consequences of Play Deprivation** – groundbreaking research on the potential serious negative consequences individually and culturally to those who do not experience play

The NIFP, led by Dr. Brown, has worked with a team of Stanford University faculty and staff to develop the online tool. The Encyclopedia of Play Science cites dozens of individual, highly praised scientific findings in a diverse range of academic and scientific disciplines, including: evolutionary biology, neuroscience, developmental and cognitive psychology, anthropology and play-related clinically and observationally based projects. This database provides a clearinghouse for findings that, when viewed together, create a cohesive picture about the proven benefits of play.

“It is our long term goal to expand society’s perception and activation of the myriad of benefits play provides for all ages,” said Tom Norquist, co-leader of the project and former IPEMA President.

Summaries of the current Encyclopedia articles can be found [here](#) on the Voice of Play’s website.

About IPEMA

The International Play Equipment Manufacturers Association is a non-profit, membership, trade association that represents and promotes an open market for manufacturers of playground equipment and surfacing. IPEMA represents and serves its members by providing information on key economic and governmental issues affecting the play equipment industry and promotes relationships among related organizations. IPEMA provides third-party product certification services for public play equipment and surfacing in the United States and Canada, ensuring compliance with ASTM and CSA trade standards.

About Voice of Play

IPEMA’s Voice of Play initiative promotes the benefits of children’s play and playgrounds by providing information and resources to encourage the quality and quantity of children’s play and the use of playgrounds. Through resources on the Voice of Play website – www.voiceofplay.com – and a social media outreach effort, the initiative heightens public awareness among key professional and consumer groups, including, parents, children, community groups, school administrators, parks and recreation professionals, playground designers and equipment manufacturers.

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