The LEGO Foundation and Sesame Workshop Highlights the Importance of Learning through Play in Parent-Child Relationships in South Africa

In celebration of World Play Day, the LEGO Foundation and Sesame Workshop, the nonprofit organisation behind Takalani Sesame, announced the result of Play Every Day, a program designed to shift parent and caregiver perceptions about the educational value of play and to encourage play that contributes to learning outcomes. The impact evaluation, conducted by an external evaluator, found significant changes in parents and caregivers’ perceptions of play and improved confidence of parents and caregivers as play mentors for their children.

Over the course of a 12-week intervention in low-resource communities in South Africa, India and Mexico, Sesame Workshop conducted weekly in-person addition to reminders utilising WhatsApp and other digital platforms and community events. The research in South Africa was conducted in IsiZulu, IsiXhosa, Orange Farm, Alexandra, Diepsloot and Braamfontein. Caregivers participating in the Play Every Day program in South Africa reported:

- Increased frequency of play by 15%
- Increased confidence as “play mentors” for their children through quality play time, with an increase of 18%
- Increased confidence using recycled materials such as plastic bottles, cans, and cardboard rolls as play objects, with an increase of 19%
- An increase of 19% in the ability to make everyday activities playful
- An 11% increase in the link between pretend play as a foundation for academic learning


“With such a large portion of the South African population being in low-resource settings, this research is invaluable and will guide Takalani Sesame programs to educate caregivers and teachers on the benefits that Learning through Play provides, as one of the most powerful ways for children to learn, develop and grow,” said Kerry Kassen, LEGO Foundation Initiatives Lead.

The facilitated workshops, implemented through local community partners, provided primary caregivers with content that is easy to replicate at home to improve the effectiveness of learning techniques and provide new ideas for engagement with children, such as building toys with recycled materials and playing pretend using everyday objects. Relevant and effective interventions, the 12-week intervention was preceded by three pilot phases between November 2016 and May 2018 that tested a variety of methods of facilitation for each country.

“The LEGO Foundation is working to build a future in which learning through play helps all children grow into creative, engaged, life-long learners. Parenting is fundamental to this aim as they are children’s first teachers and playmates. We are excited about the positive results from the Play Every Day program. We are delighted to empower primary caregivers in South Africa to harness the power of learning through play,” said Kerry Kassen, LEGO Foundation Initiatives Lead.

The findings have been announced as we celebrate World Play Day on 28 May. To mark this important day, Sesame Workshop and the LEGO Foundation Trust to host an event at the Multipurpose Centre in Sasolburg on 1 June 2019. Takalani Sesame Muppets Zuzu and Kami will join over 300 children to highlight “Play is a right.” The event will feature songs, dancing, and play activities for children.

https://parentinghub.co.za/new-research-on-the-importance-of-learning-through-play/
"We’re deeply committed to bringing learning experiences to children across South Africa through Takalani Sesame, and we too believe that play is a right.

World Play Day, we have a lot to celebrate; with the new research findings, we will be able to build upon our work to ensure that every child has access to it.

Additional highlights from the Play Every Day impact evaluation can be found online here [here](https://www.sesameworkshop.org/sites/default/files/2019-05/pe).

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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