

## BLOCKFest<sup>TM</sup> Comes to North Carolina

PAT programs across North Carolina are already sharing this exciting interactive exhibit offering a chance to provide hands on math and science learning. Block Fest<sup>TM</sup> NC is a research-based interactive exhibit that raises awareness of early math and science learning by offering block play experiences for young children and their families. Parents, preschool teachers and the larger community are learning more about the importance of early math and science learning and how it impacts both school readiness and later math success. The North Carolina Parents as Teachers Network (NCPAT) believes Block Fest<sup>TM</sup> NC can play a significant role in helping parents prepare their child for success in school.

**Block Fest<sup>TM</sup> NC is an interactive exhibit for parents and children created by the University of Idaho Parents as Teachers Demonstration Project.** Parents discover how they can help their children learn early math and science concepts while they play with blocks using guided play and conversation.

### Who can benefit from Block Fest<sup>TM</sup> NC?

Block Fest<sup>TM</sup> NC is for all parents and their children from ages eight months to eight years. The

exhibit is also accessible to children with special needs and Spanish-speaking families. Parents and children spend ten minutes playing at each of five unique block stations. Facilitators at each station share information about child development and how children learn math and science concepts through block exploration.

**Initial funding for Block Fest<sup>TM</sup> NC was made possible through a Ribbon of Hope grant awarded by the NC GlaxoSmithKline Foundation to pilot Block Fest<sup>TM</sup> NC in four North Carolina counties.** The North Carolina Head Start State Collaboration Office also contributed to the purchase of exhibit pieces including banners and information boards and made possible the translation of all BlockFest<sup>TM</sup> materials and exhibit pieces into Spanish. A special thanks to Kaplan Early Learning Company and KEVA, Inc., for donating blocks for specific block stations.

### What the research shows:

Research demonstrates that early math learning is a key predictor of school readiness in young children and that block play provides opportunities for young children to learn early math and science

concepts. Through block play children learn concepts such as quantity, patterns, sorting, counting, adding and subtracting, classifying, volume and area, and measurement. These fundamental concepts prepare children for understanding more advanced math concepts later in their school career.

**The goal of Block Fest<sup>TM</sup> NC is to give parents a deeper understanding of the connection between block play and early math and science learning.** Parents will learn the importance of early math learning as it relates to school readiness. For more information, you can read the research paper, [Early Math Skills – Building Blocks for the Future](#) at <http://blockfest.ncpat.org>.

*“It was great to see my child make a plan about what he was going to build and follow through with his ideas. He tested the different sizes and shapes to get his structure to balance.”*





### Visit Tracker Available On-Line

Many of our PAT Programs are currently using the new web based version of Visit Tracker. Parent Educators have been positive about having the availability for record-keeping online and not tied to one computer. If you have not tried the system, please visit [www.visittrackerweb.com](http://www.visittrackerweb.com) for a demonstration. Remember that North Carolina PAT programs can register free this year.

### Self-Assessment Summary Report

Robin Roberts, the PAT State Coordinator, has compiled a Self-Assessment Summary Report that can be downloaded from [www.ncpat.org](http://www.ncpat.org). Click on "For Professionals," then select "Supporting Documents" to locate the report.

### "Did you learn something today that you will use with your child at home?"

Parents responded to that question enthusiastically after attending a BlockFest™ session with their child. Read some of their comments below:

*"Very fun! My baby loved playing with the blocks and interacting with other babies."*

*"Blocks help with math and colors and it stimulates their imagination. I learned a lot just by watching the things they built."*

*"It really is enjoyable teaching kids about colors and building."*

*"Yes, the building and naming colors and seeing what they do without help."*

*"Discussing more, using counting and numbers more, as well as shapes and colors as we talk."*

*"We already play blocks but I have never stressed making patterns, so we will do this now!"*

*"Yes, to let him learn to build and knock blocks over."*

## Block Fest™ is on the road in North Carolina!

Block Fest™ NC is on the road in 2009 and available to any PAT program in NC!

If you want to bring Block Fest™ to your community this year:

- 1) Submit your Site Request Form to the Block Fest™ Coordinator, Alice Bullock, at [alice.bullock@ncpat.org](mailto:alice.bullock@ncpat.org). A Site Request Form can be downloaded from the website at <http://blockfest.ncpat.org>.
- 2) After the Site Request Form is received we can set a date for your program to host the exhibit. You will receive a powerpoint to help market Block Fest™ NC, and several other helpful items.
- 3) One or two PAT staff must attend a Facilitator Workshop to learn how to make the most of this exhibit in your community; these workshops are offered by the Regional PAT Coordinators and will be scheduled a couple months prior to your exhibit date.
- 4) Enjoy the exhibit – you are free to make this a media-rich, community-wide exhibit, or a much simpler affair – that is up to you and will be discussed in the Facilitator Workshop. We do hope that other Early Childhood partners (i.e., Head Start, More at Four, etc.) will be involved as this broadens the impact of the exhibit.

Check the web site at <http://blockfest.ncpat.org> for upcoming Block Fest™ NC events and facilitator workshops.

### Response to Block Fest™ has been OVERWHELMING!!!

Response to Block Fest™ NC has been overwhelming.

Over 1,300 parents and children participated in the exhibit during the pilot phase in Catawba, Davidson, Pasquotank, and Rutherford Counties, from October through November 2008.



After attending Block Fest™:

- 95% of parents reported they gained new knowledge about how their child learned through block play.
- 90% of parents reported they learned ways to support early math and science learning for their child.

# Development: *The Magic of Blocks*

Playing with blocks provides one of the most valuable learning experiences for young children. Research shows that playing with blocks enhances all areas of development, especially math and science. It is an open ended activity that enhances learning, sorting, matching, counting, measuring, balancing, estimating, adding,



subtracting, problem solving and critical thinking. Block building stimulates children's imagination and creativity as they try out an idea and see what happens with their idea. Blocks should be introduced to the youngest learners and made available to children throughout the early childhood years. The lessons learned in block play are fundamental to the growth and development of children.

Babies love to bang blocks and knock down towers that you have built. By 12 months of age, babies can put blocks in and out of a container and begin to stack. By age 2, children can stack 6 blocks for a tower and lay blocks side by side to build a road. This simple stacking is followed by children building bridges and making enclosures and other structures. By ages four and five, children will build elaborate structures together and often use cars, and animal and people figures to pretend as they play and build.

## Tips for Block Play



Provide a space for block play. Use a flat rug or masking tape to define an area.

Provide a good supply of blocks, such as "unit" blocks in different shapes, including ramps, curves, cylinders, as well as squares and rectangles.

Wooden or foam unit blocks are a good investment as your children will play with them for many years in a variety of ways.

Store blocks, if possible, on shelves at your child's eye level, and group blocks by size and shape. Label the shelf with a cut-out or picture of the blocks. This will help with clean up and will teach matching.

Add props and other accessories such as cars, trucks,

plastic people, animals, paper and crayons, etc. to encourage children to extend their play.

Look at and talk about the child's creation. Comment using math words, "You used 2 square blocks to make a rectangle." "Let's count how many blocks you used in your tower."

Expand math vocabulary. Talk about circles, squares, triangles, rectangles, cubes, hexagons, spheres, in, out, above, under, more, less, equal, add, etc.

Ask open-ended questions, "How did you get the big block to balance on top of the other blocks?" Avoid asking "What is it?" and instead use a phrase such as "Tell me about..."

Follow the child's lead during block play. Remember that your child needs to experiment

and create using his or her own ideas.

Offer support and help children problem-solve by asking leading questions, "Do you think another shape might work better here?"

Show genuine interest and comment on construction details. "Your castle has more rooms than the one you built before," or "Look how tall your tower is!" Specific comments let children know that their play is important and that their hard work is appreciated.



## NC-PAT Network News

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## UPCOMING TRAINING SESSIONS

### **PAT Born to Learn™ Prenatal to Three Institutes**

- **September 14- 18, 2009**  
*Location: Raleigh, NC*
- **November 16- 20, 2009**  
*Location: Raleigh, NC*
- **March 15- 19, 2010**  
*Location: Raleigh, NC*

### **PAT Born to Learn™ Three to K Institutes**

- **October 20- 21, 2009**  
*Location: Raleigh, NC*
- **March 2- 3, 2010**  
*Location: Raleigh, NC*

### **Inservice/ Special Training Sessions**

<b>October 1-3, 2009</b>	<b>NCAEYC Conference</b>	<b>Raleigh, NC</b>
<b>November 8-11, 2009</b>	<b>PAT Conference 2009</b>	<b>St. Louis, MO</b>

*Additional training announcements, registration information and forms can be found online at [www.ncpat.org](http://www.ncpat.org)*

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### **Project Enlightenment**

501 S. Boylan Ave.

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- 919-664-7781 (main office) ● 919-508-0810 (fax)

To obtain a registration packet, please return the form below to Project Enlightenment indicating the institute you wish to attend *or* access the information online at [www.ncpat.org](http://www.ncpat.org). Questions? Please call 664-7781.

### **Request for PAT Training Registration Packet**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Position/Title \_\_\_\_\_

Agency/School District \_\_\_\_\_

#### **Address (where you want your PAT correspondence sent)**

Street \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_