



BRAIN BUILDING 101

The Brain Building in Progress campaign is a public/private partnership of the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care (EEC), United Way of Massachusetts Bay and Merrimack Valley and a growing community of early education and child care providers, academic researchers, business leaders and others. Our work is based upon the latest science and research on early childhood development. Our mission is to raise awareness of the critical importance of fostering the cognitive, social and emotional development of young children by emphasizing its future impact on the economic prosperity of everyone in Massachusetts. We welcome the business, education, and policy-making communities, as well as members of the media to be part of this crucial venture. By giving a strong start to our youngest citizens, we create a stronger, more prosperous future for all.

The Science Behind Brain Building

When we understand the sequence and process by which brains are built, it's easy to understand why it's a smart investment to start every child out strong. Science shows that early experiences directly shape how the brain develops. According to the Harvard University Center on the Developing Child, Stanford University and other leading researchers:

- In the first few years of life, **700 new neural connections are formed every second.**
- Neural connections, and the architecture of the developing brain, are built through **back-and-forth interactions with adults in enriching environments.**
- Brain building is disrupted by "**toxic stress,**" a term that describes chronic stressful conditions rooted in causes such as poverty, neglect, or maternal depression. Toxic stress **increases the likelihood of developmental delays.**
- Several studies have shown that, **as early as 18 months,** there are notable **disparities in vocabulary** between children from language-rich, high interaction homes and those who are not. Recent Stanford research showed that **by age two, this equals a six month gap** in language processing skills and vocabulary. By using increasing interaction, using richer language and child-directed talk, **parents can help their child to learn more quickly.**

How can you get involved with the Brain Building in Progress Campaign?

- Read more information about the campaign including our **5 key messages**
- Learn about the **programs in your community that support families**, such as museums, libraries, and EEC's Coordinated Family and Community Engagement programs
- Find family **events and activities happening in your community** such as Story Walks, Family Fun Days, Playgroups, and Parenting Education
- **Download materials to use and share**, including parent-child activity sheets, campaign overview documents, and the Brain Building in Progress logo for your website

Follow us on social media:

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 @MassEarlyEdCare

Visit our website:

BrainBuildingInProgress.org

How does Brain Building happen?

Brain Building can happen anywhere, not just in a formal school or early education programs.

Anyone can be a Brain Builder by reading with children, asking lots of open-ended questions or engaging them in play. Any moment can be a Brain Building moment. Brain Building can happen during every day interactions with a child, such as counting the stars, finding letters on street signs, or making a homemade card.

