

TASP 2025

51ST Annual Conference

The Association for the Study of Play

Theme: Sustaining Play

February 26 – March 1, 2025

**Holiday Inn Resort
South Padre Island
TEXAS**

ABOUT TASP

The Association for the Study of Play (TASP) is the premier professional organization in academia dedicated to interdisciplinary research and theory construction concerning play throughout the world since 1973. Presently the Association publishes a quarterly newsletter titled *Play Review* and an annual volume titled *Play & Culture Studies*. The TASP members also receive the *International Journal of Play*. The Association's broad multidisciplinary focus includes the fields of anthropology, biology, communication studies, cultural studies, dance, ecology, education, ethnology, folklore, history, kinesiology, leisure studies, musicology, philosophy, psychology, recreation, sociology, and the arts.

TASP originated in Minneapolis, Minnesota on April 14, 1973, when Alyce Taylor Cheska convened and chaired a meeting of more than thirty scholars then publishing research within the general rubric of play. This critical mass of interested scholars formed the Cultural Anthropology of Play Reprint Society, and Michael Salter organized the first official meeting of the new organization in London, Ontario, later that same year. There, playful academic folks interested in studying and writing about play came together, reorganized as The Association for the Anthropological Study of Play (TAASP), and elected B. Allan Tindall as their first president. The organization changed its name to The Association for the Study of Play (TASP) in 1987.

TASP conducts a scholarly conference each year. Meetings have been held throughout North America and in Europe, including in Paris and Salzburg. During its early years, TASP published proceedings of the meetings, but beginning in 1988, annual publications replaced the proceedings. *Play & Culture* and the *Journal of Play Theory & Research* preceded the current *Play & Culture Studies*.

Keynote Speaker



Dr. James E. Johnson

James E. Johnson is Professor Emerita of Early Childhood Education at the Pennsylvania State University. Jim has been an active member of The Association for the Study of Play serving as President, Series Editor of the TASP Bi-Annual Play and Culture Studies, Member of the Executive Council, and Book Review Editor. Due to his stellar service and scholarship, he received two of the Association's highest honors, The Brian Sutton-Smith Play Scholar Award, and the first ever Distinguished Research Career Award in recognition of his noteworthy contributions to play research and leadership in TASP. Jim also serves a member of the International Journal of Play's Editorial Board.

Guest Speaker

Dr. Mary Payton

Mary Payton is an award-winning STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) Communicator, who has taught throughout the United States and internationally. She holds a B.A. in Physical Education and Biology, a MEd in General Education, A MEd in STEM Education and an EdD in Adult Education. Dr. Payton returned to STEM education after a successful 29-year Army career as a Chemical Officer. After retiring as a Lieutenant Colonel Dr. Payton began her teaching career in Alabama at Jacksonville State University. She is a native Texan who has taught for Fort Worth and Dallas Independent School Districts, Texas A&M International and Texas Wesleyan Universities. Dr. Payton has enjoyed teaching in the UAE, Costa Rica and South Korea where she also served as the principal. Dr. Payton has been honored for her performance as a STEM educator with Texas Wesleyan University in the areas of Robotics and Engineering.



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Welcome message from Dr. Ruth Guirguis

President of TASP

Dear TASPians

Welcome to the 2025 Annual Conference of The Association for the Study of Play (TASP)! We are delighted to gather with you on the beautiful beaches of South Padre Island, Texas.

This year's conference theme celebrates the transformative power of play. A timeless force that continues to inspire creativity, foster connection, and provide relief in an ever-changing world. Amid the challenges of divisive politics, climate crises, and the rapid growth of technology, play stands as a vital reminder of the resilience and joy that bind us together. South Padre Island is a picturesque location and a fitting setting for this year's conversations. Its diversity, resilience, and community spirit echo the values we hold dear in TASP.

A heartfelt thank you goes to Vejoya for her outstanding leadership of the planning committee. Your efforts have ensured a meaningful and enriching experience for all of us. We are also profoundly grateful to Krysta, Michael, Sharon, Myae, and Tori, whose dedication and support have been instrumental in bringing this conference to life. We are especially thrilled to welcome Jim Johnson and Mary Payton, our keynote speakers, whose insights will undoubtedly deepen our appreciation for the role of play in our lives and work.

Thank you for joining us as we explore the many dimensions of play. Your presence here enriches this community and underscores the importance of our shared mission. We look forward to engaging in thoughtful discussions, building new connections, and embracing the creative spirit that makes TASP special.

Playfully,

Ruth V. Guirguis Ed.D

President

The Association for the Study of Play

Message from Vejoya Viren

Conference Chair

Dear TASP conference participants,

Welcome, and thank you for joining us at the southernmost tip of Texas for the 51st Annual Conference of TASP! For those of you who braved the recent polar vortex, I hope the mild winter temperatures of South Texas prove to be a pleasant change.

This year's theme, "Sustaining Play," speaks to, both, the urgent need to sustain play in our lives and in the lives of our children and the equally important need to rediscover the sustaining power of play in an increasingly unpredictable world.

I'm delighted to welcome you to South Padre Island, a unique destination known for its leisure and relaxation, turtle rescue efforts, bird-watching opportunities, vibrant spring break culture, warm winter weather, rocket launch events, friendly winter Texans, delicious TexMex cuisine, and fresh seafood. But it's also a place of deep contrast: manmade borders, sonic booms, warming Gulf waters, and protests against LNG pipelines. It's truly an adventure playground for engaging thoughtful conversations.

I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to the TASP conference committee—Ruth Guirguis, Myae Han, Michael Kamen, Krysta Murillo, Tugce Tuncdemir, and Tori Flint—for their exceptional guidance and support. . I also extend my sincere thanks to The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley's College of Education and the Department of Human Development & School Services for their invaluable contributions, including AV equipment and personnel.

As always, the true highlight of TASP lies in the people, the presentations, camaraderie, mentorship, networking, and the lasting relationships that form. This year will be no different. I encourage you to engage in play with the interactive spaces in the venue and share your thoughts and stories on the writing walls.

Once again, welcome to TASP 2025! I hope this experience is as meaningful and enriching for you as my very first TASP conference was for me.

Respectfully,

Vejoya Viren

2025 Conference Chair

The Association for the Study of Play

CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 26

6:00–9:00pm

RECEPTION & REGISTRATION

Holiday Inn South Padre Island, South Padre Island, TX
Location: Sea4ever (rooftop gulf view)

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 27

8:00-8:30am

OPENING REMARKS ~ Hibiscus C/B

Room →

Magnolia A

Magnolia B

Hibiscus D

Hibiscus B/C

8:45 -9:45
Session I

My Journey of Play and Literacy Research: Why play?
Myae Han

Play Stories
Katelyn Clark

The sustainability of livelihood and play in the Himalayas.
Hiyori Akita

Examining Playful Pedagogies - A European Study Abroad Program
Michael Patte

Creative Storytelling and Play in Dementia Care through TimeSlips.
Sarah Derven Workshop

10:00-11:00
Session II

Play and Fun among Content Creators on YouTube.
Bhoomi Thakore

Outdoor play in Finland for a study abroad program.
Andrea Nikkole Campos, John Sutterby, Rica Ramirez, Jennifer N. Fassio, Katherine Marshall

Workshop Utilizing Parent-Coaching to Promote Play for Children in Medical Settings.
Stephanie Kuntz & Myae Han

Development and validation of the Playful Parenting Scale (PPS)
Xiangyou (Sharon) Shen and Maayan Shore

The Power of Sensory Play.
Katie Shine and Kayleigh Haugh

The Joys and Tribulations of Delivering Playful Learning in Corporate and MBA Environments
Ed Gonzalez workshop

11:15- 12:15

CONVERSATION HOUR: PLAY ACROSS LIFESPAN Hibiscus B/C

12:30-1:30

LUNCH (on your own)

1:45-2:45

KEYNOTE – JAMES EWALD JOHNSON - Hibiscus B/C

Rooms→

Magnolia A

Magnolia B

Hibiscus D

Hibiscus B/C

3:00-4:00 pm Session III	Pre-service teachers' playful mindset. Tugce B. Arda Tuncdemir Sharon M. Peck, Akosua Addo, Tabitha Dell'Angelo & Ruth Guirguis Panel	Reading to Cats: Play-Literacies in Out-of-School Spaces Tori Flint The development of Play in Cereal Box packaging. Lucia Daher, Doug Maynard, & Lars Ellwanger	Playful Path to Parenting: Experiencing and Exploring Evidence-Based Strategies for Integrating Play in Parent-Child Interactions. Xiangyou (Sharon) Shen <i>Workshop</i>	
4:15-5:15 pm Session IV	Cultivating creativity & mindfulness with Play. Ellen Beattie <i>Workshop</i>	Storytelling and forum theatre: Sustaining Community Through Play. Debora Wisneski <i>Workshop</i>	Experience Based Learning: A Renewed Perspective of Early Childhood Learning. Marilyn Nicol <i>Workshop</i>	
6:00-8:00 pm	CONFERENCE DINNER Hotel Lobby			
FRIDAY – February 28				
8:00-8:45am	GUEST SPEAKER: MARY PAYTON Hibiscus B/C			
Rooms →	Magnolia A	Magnolia B	Hibiscus D	Hibiscus B/C
9:00-10:00 Session I	Teacher Humor: Building Connections, Managing Stress, and Developing Classroom Presence. Tabitha Dell'Angelo Time Pressure, Stress, and Guilt as Barriers to Adult Play. Lars Ellwanger and Doug Maynard	Pre-service Educators' Beliefs about Children's Play in Taiwan and Texas. Lin Moore, Elaine Zweig, & Sandra Morales, A Sociological Model of Playfulness in competitive communities. Nick Sherefkin	Children as researchers: Workshop on collecting science data from toys. Olga S. Jarrett & Robert Jarrett <i>Workshop</i>	
10:15-11:15 Session II	War Play for Peace: Harnessing Generic Toys for Global Impact. Brian McCarty Embracing PLAY in K-16 teaching. Digital media as playful tool. Miryam Espinosa-Dulanto	Play and its connection to Vernacular architecture. Daniel Ness Play, Animate, Innovate - Empowering Black Boys through Creative Computing and Co-Design.	The Untapped Potential of LEGO Bricks for Later Life Play. Natalia Kasperovich Panel	Supporting infants & Toddlers in risky play. Joanna Spotts

	Acting Confucians is Amazing! Teaching Ancient Asian Philosophy to Gen-Z American. Students through Role Playing Game. <i>Shu Wan</i>	<i>Kareem Edouard</i>		
11:30 12:30	Plenary Session: GRADUATE STUDENTS' CONVERSATION HOUR Hibiscus B/C			
12:30 -1:30	LUNCH (on your own)			
Rooms →	Magnolia A	Magnolia B	Hibiscus D	Hibiscus B/C
1:45 - 2: 45 Session III	Play-Based Programs: Themes for Success. <i>Michael Kamen & Sydney Jackson</i> The Play's the Thing: Emotional Health Predicts Adult Play Orientation <i>Dara Greenwood & Doug Maynard</i>	Adventure playgrounds in Houston: A Historical Study. <i>Deepti Kharod, John Sutterby, & Jill Wood</i> Panel	Cultivating a Playwork Movement in the United States. <i>Susan Chlebowski and Jonathan McCloud</i> Workshop	Roll the dice: Play your way into student-centered teaching. <i>Marta Cabral</i> Workshop
3:00 - 4:00 Session IV	Global Playful Concientización as Playful Praxis in Education. <i>Diana H. Cortez-Castro</i> Capitalizing on Young Children's Cultural and Linguistic Capital Through Dramatic Play. <i>Irasema Salinas-González</i>	Children's politics in free play. <i>Ana Marjanovic-Shane</i> Balancing Basic Research in Children's Play and Ethics: Navigating IRB – <i>Smita Mathur</i>	Designing Language Learning Experiences through Culture-Driven, Playful Coding. <i>Ehean Kim</i> Play as a Strategy to Foster Anti-bias and Inclusivity in Children - <i>Lorna Durrant & Krysta Murillo</i>	At Play in School: Racial, Social, & Environmental Justice. <i>Tia Mathisen, Andrea Myers, & Jen Bradley</i> Panel
4:15 - 5:15 Session V	¡Vamos a Jugar con STEAM! Let's Play with STEAM! <i>Julia Cuevas</i> Workshop	Beyond Reactivity: Play as a Path to Collective Power and Connection. <i>Carrie Lobman</i> Workshop	Play and Playful Design for Treatment of Mental Illness <i>Corinne Knox-Germans</i> Parasocial interactions and relationships: Vicarious Play. <i>Vejoya Viren</i>	
5:30 –6:30	BUSINESS MEETING: OPEN to ALL - Hibiscus B/C			
6:30 -7:30	BOARD MEETING: Executive Committee - Magnolia B			

SATURDAY – MARCH 1				
Room →	Magnolia A	Magnolia B	Hibiscus D	Hibiscus B/C
9:00 - 10:00 Session I	Board Game Creation to Teach History of Architecture and Design. Catherine Kendall What Is A VLE? An Indoor Play Area Based On Vygotsky's Social Cultural Theory. Hilda Medrano, Eva Alejandro, & Perla Olivares	An Introduction to Sandtray Therapy for Processing Grief. Clarissa Salinas & Eunice Lerma Everyday Medical Play and Scaffolding Children's Healthcare Knowledge. Shannon Dier, Rachel Thibodeau-Nielsen, Alaina Dooley, & Maria Rueda Posada	Fostering Inclusive Play: Combating Bias and Promoting Diversity in Early Childhood. Stephanie Reynolds Workshop	
10:15 - 11:15 Session II	Playing with Numbers: Choice, Joy, and Wonder in Mathematics Education. Michael Kamen & Debra Plowman Workshop	The Playful Presence: Mindfulness Practices for Educators Bringing Playfulness & Presence into Teaching and Life. Sara Ahangar Ahmadi Workshop	Play Within Place: Arts + Geography for Communities of Learners. Angela Dittmar Workshop	
11:30 -12:00	CLOSING Hibiscus B/C			

Session Abstracts

Thursday

Session I

Play Stories.

Katelyn Clark

Play Stories invites early childhood educators to reflect deeply on their own childhood experiences and adult play and build their understanding of how their own identities shape their perspectives on children's play. Katelyn Clark's model for uncovering and telling play stories is revealed through four educators' personal play narratives: the Puzzler, the Character, the Explorer, and the Maker. Writing the stories of their own play provides a new platform for educators to understand their play pedagogy from a more holistic perspective and to identify where they really playfully shine in their classrooms, thereby becoming more invested in the play of their students.

Creative Storytelling and Play in Dementia Care through TimeSlips. Workshop

Sarah Derven

This session explores how TimeSlips, a creative storytelling program, fosters meaningful engagement for people living with dementia and Alzheimer's. Despite cognitive decline, creativity remains a powerful tool for connection and joy. Participants will learn key TimeSlips principles such as using visual prompts, open-ended questions, and group facilitation techniques. As a new TimeSlips facilitator, I will share my experiences, reflecting on the challenges and rewards of leading these sessions. Additionally, the session will highlight a collaboration with Skidmore College art students. Attendees will engage in a hands-on demonstration, experiencing the power of imagination in dementia care. This session is ideal for caregivers, healthcare professionals, artists, and educators looking to use creativity to connect with and uplift those living with dementia.

The sustainability of livelihood and play in the Himalayas.

Hiyori Akita

This research is a cultural anthropological investigation of play culture of Himalayan region and its marginal activities in the UT Ladakh of India. Ladakh is located in the northern part of India, in the western Himalayas. It is a high altitude, arid region surrounded by 4000m-8000m mountains. Because of this geographical feature, the people living in Ladakh cooperate with each other and utilize natural and animal resources in a sustainable manner. In addition, play and livelihood are more seamlessly connected than in urban areas. This presentation will focus on the sustainability observed between play and livelihood of people in Ladakh, based on data obtained during the field survey conducted in September 2024-January 2025.

Examining Playful Pedagogies: A European Study Abroad Program.

Michael Patte

Participants will learn about a field-based study abroad experience in Europe to explore a wide variety of theories, practices, and pedagogical approaches for promoting multicultural perspectives, civic responsibility, critical thinking, reflective practice, personal development, play, creativity, and the arts for children, youth, and adolescents across a variety of settings.

Session II

Play and Fun among Content Creators on YouTube.

Bhoomi Thakore

Since its 2005 launch, YouTube has existed as the premier site for video content and entertainment, maintaining its significance influence on society and culture. Viewers have found opportunities to cultivate their interests and communities; creators now have a platform to showcase their identities and creativity, with the potential for profit.

In this presentation, I will present qualitative findings from a sample of YouTube users and content creators, highlighting YouTube's role in facilitating fun and play within entertainment and leisure contexts.

Outdoor play in Finland for a study abroad program.

Andrea Nikkole Campos, John Sutterby, Rica Ramírez, Jennifer N. Fassio, Katherine Marshall

UTSA students and faculty took a study abroad course in Finland in the summer of 2024. Graduate students and faculty returned with observations and experiences on outdoor play in Finland. Finland has been a source for encouraging outdoor play for decades, dating back to the early years of the International Play Association. This presentation will focus on UTSA students and faculty and their observations and reflections on the emphasis and opportunities for outdoor play promoted in Finland during the summer abroad program. These opportunities included community parks, specialized parks like traffic and adventure parks, and school playgrounds.

The Power of Sensory Play. Workshop

Katie Shine and Kayleigh Haugh

This proposal outlines a workshop on sensory play for this year's conference, emphasizing its critical role in early childhood development. Recognizing play as a child's primary occupation, we address the growing awareness of sensory processing challenges children may encounter throughout their day. Our session will delve into the neurological foundations of sensory processing issues and offer practical strategies for supporting all children in play and learning environments. Participants will engage in an interactive experience featuring three sensory play stations, allowing them to explore and create. This workshop aims to foster understanding and highlight the significance of sensory play in promoting well-being and educational success for all children.

Utilizing Parent-Coaching to Promote Play for Children in Medical Settings.

Stephanie Kuntz and Myae Han

Hospitalized children face significant adversities, however, play serves as a vital source of resilience (D'Antonio, 1984; Haiat et al., 2003). High-quality parent-child interactions can also be a source of resilience (Gilligan, 2004). Parents may need additional support in providing these playful and nurturing interactions (Johnson et al., 2005). Integrating play into the medical setting comes with significant barriers (Singh et al., 2019). We propose the utilization of parent-coaching to support engagement in high-quality parent-child interactions through play. Parent-coaching is widely implemented in Early Intervention and uses adult learning strategies to promote parents' abilities to support their children (Kemp & Turnbull, 2014). We provide a set of recommendations for practitioners to promote high-quality parent-child interactions through play

Development and validation of the Playful Parenting Scale (PPS)

Xiangyou (Sharon) Shen

This study presents the development and validation of the Playful Parenting Scale (PPS), a theory-informed instrument assessing parents' playful approach to everyday parent-child interactions. Through conceptual evaluation by researchers, parenting educators, and caregivers, and quantitative validation via a survey study (n = 205), we identified and confirmed five dimensions

of playful parenting: prioritizing fun and play, incorporating play, responsive support, flexibility, and playful reframing. The final scale demonstrates strong psychometric properties, including good internal consistency ($\omega = 0.832-0.863$) and construct validity through correlations with theoretically relevant measures of parenting practices and parent-child relationship. The PPS provides researchers and practitioners with a reliable and valid tool for assessing and promoting playful parenting, advancing research on family well-being and child development outcomes.

The Joys and Tribulations of Delivering Playful Learning in Corporate and MBA Environments. [Workshop](#)

[Ed Gonsalves](#)

In a world increasingly defined by volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity (VUCA), traditional learning methods often fall short of preparing leaders to navigate these challenges. This workshop introduces Enigma, or derived activity which will take the form of a communication and collaborative play-based activity, as a catalyst for dialogue around the challenges and rewards of integrating playful learning in corporate and MBA training environments. Participants will engage with the activity, explore its application, and reflect on the value of ludic approaches in fostering critical skills like flexible thinking, creativity, and leadership in ambiguous settings.

Session III

Playful Path to Parenting: Experiencing and Exploring Evidence-Based Strategies for Integrating Play in Parent-Child Interactions. [Workshop](#)

[Xiangyou \(Sharon\) Shen](#)

This interactive workshop introduces key evidence-based strategies from the Playful Path to Parenting (P3) program, a novel intervention designed to enhance parent-child interactions through playfulness. Guided by the Playful Reframing and Engagement in Parenting (PREP) framework and drawing from successful implementation with families, we demonstrate how playful approaches can transform parent-child interactions through three key elements: prioritizing play, spontaneity and flexibility, and playful reframing. Through mini-talks grounded in current research and hands-on activities, participants will explore how playfulness can address common parenting challenges while strengthening family connections. Supported by our research-informed Funtastic Playbook for Parents, the workshop offers valuable tools and insights for researchers and practitioners interested in fostering child development and family wellbeing through play

Reading to Cats: Play-Literature in out-of-school spaces.

[Tori Flint](#)

In this session, the presenter will share research conducted on a program called 'Kitty Litter-ature.' In this program, children and families visit a no-kill animal shelter and read storybooks to cats and kittens to: build children's confidence, teach compassion, support family literacy, socialize the animals, and ultimately, to create a fun and engaging space and experience for the animals and the children. The study shared here will highlight children's literacy practices outside of the classroom context, recognizing the many benefits that children derive from playful literacy engagements in such spaces, which often go unrecognized as productive sites of learning. This session will highlight key findings of the study and engage participants in lively discussion about play-literacies.

The development of Play in Cereal Box packaging.

[Lucia Daher, Doug Maynard, & Lars Ellwanger](#)

The inclusion of play opportunities in and on cereal box packaging in the United States has been a focal point in children's advertising and marketing for many years, yet there has been little scholarly attention to the evolution of cereal box play artifacts. In this presentation, we describe a

two-part investigative study which explores themes and findings of cereal box play from the 1940s to the present. These findings will be based upon a historical analysis of popular cereal brands (e.g., Rice Krispies, Lucky Charms) as well as an extensive survey of all major cereal found in grocery stores today. Connections between these findings and wider sociocultural developments, as well as implications for children's play more broadly will be explored.

Pre-service teachers' playful mindset.

Tugce B. Arda Tuncdemir, Sharon M. Peck, Akosua Addo, Tabitha Dell'Angelo, & Ruth Guirguis

In this session, we will explore the impact of incorporating playful strategies into teacher preparation programs. The focus will be on how these approaches help develop the playful mindsets of preservice teachers. The research draws from a study conducted at five U.S. universities, using pre- and post-surveys and focus group interviews to assess changes in attitudes toward playful pedagogy. The findings indicate increased confidence among preservice teachers in using playful methods, supported by environmental and curricular elements that promote creativity and flexibility. By addressing misconceptions about play and promoting 21st-century skills such as collaboration and critical thinking, this session will demonstrate how playful curricula can improve engagement, mental health, and retention of learning. Overall, it encourages a transformative approach to early childhood education.

Session IV

Storytelling and Forum Theatre: Sustaining Community Through Play. Workshop

Debora Wisneski

Playful dramatic performances offer a rich opportunity for discourse and inquiry, particularly around the topics of community and social justice. From early childhood settings to adult learning, dramatic play has been a process used to learn about society and communal life. This workshop will review the philosophies underlying play practices connected to sustaining a just community. Participants will be guided to 1) participate in storytelling/story-acting as based on kindergarten teacher Vivian Paley's model and Forum Theater based on social activist Augusto Boal's Theater of the Oppressed. 2) Reflect on the process, potential, and limitations of using play in this manner. The workshop will help participants explore play as a form of building a just community that includes dialogue and inquiry.

Experience Based Learning: A Renewed Perspective of Early Childhood Learning. Workshop

Marilyn Nicol

Preschool children have an instinctive desire to learn, discover, and try new things. Their natural curiosity is attracted to anything they are unfamiliar with, so that makes children interested in trying most everything. Experience based learning is a method of instruction where children actively participate in the learning process. Join me for an exciting hands-on session to learn more about this model and how to implement experience-based learning in your classroom.

Cultivating creativity & mindfulness with Play. Workshop

Ellen Beattie

Embark on a playful exploration of the mind. This interactive session delves into the neuroscience of creativity, mindfulness, and positivity, revealing how they intertwine to enhance learning and well-being. Begin with a brief journey into the brain's creative corridors, understanding how mindfulness practices prime our neural pathways for innovation. Transition into hands-on activities that merge mindfulness with playful creativity. Imagine inventing toys for the Wild, Wild West, then collaboratively transforming a simple canvas into a tapestry of collective imagination. Each exercise is an opportunity to experience firsthand how mindfulness can amplify creativity and deepen the enjoyment and educational value of games. Designed for anyone passionate about

leveraging play for transformative learning, this session promises not only insights but also practical strategies to integrate into your work and play. Join me to ignite a cycle of positive emotions and creativity that enriches teaching and learning experiences.

Friday, February 28

Session I

Teacher Humor: Building Connections, Managing Stress, and Developing Classroom Presence.

Tabitha Dell'Angelo

This study examines how teachers use humor as a classroom tool, building on earlier research on teacher coping mechanisms during the COVID-19 pandemic. Responses to initial questions on stress management revealed that many educators use humor both to connect with students and to manage personal stress. By exploring various humor types—such as puns, slapstick, and sarcasm—this project seeks to understand when and why teachers employ humor, its successes, and potential challenges. Additionally, the study investigates whether humor can buffer against occupational stress. While teacher training emphasizes pedagogy and content, it often overlooks relational and performative skills. This research aims to uncover whether teachers' humor skills are innate or developed, and how they may evolve over time and context.

Time Pressure, Stress, and Guilt as Barriers to Adult Play.

Lars Ellwanger and Doug Maynard

We explored the role of time pressure on stress and feelings of guilt around play, and the effects of these three experiences on adults' feelings of play fulfillment. Survey data from adults in the United States (N = 258) were collected using Prolific. Parallel mediation analysis revealed that time pressure was associated with less play fulfillment both directly as well as indirectly through increases in stress. Time pressure also predicted greater play guilt, but guilt did not mediate the time pressure-fulfillment relationship. Trait playfulness was also examined as a potential buffer but did not affect these results. We will explore implications of the impact of time pressure and stress for the play lives of adults.

Children as researchers: Workshop on collecting science data from toys.

Olga S. Jarrett & Robert Jarrett

This session is a workshop that demonstrates ways children can collect data and learn science concepts through handmade and commercial toys. Rotating through learning stations, participants will explore science concepts such as magnetism with magnets on matchbox cars, center of balance with balancing butterflies, angles of reflection with kaleidoscopes, electrical circuits with small LEDs and playdoh, spin time with tops, operating time with windup toys, spinning and gravity with paper "helicopters," and more. These activities will be followed by a discussion on the importance of making science fun in elementary school in order to develop lasting interest in science. Participants will receive a handout with these and additional ideas.

Pre-service Educators' Beliefs about Children's Play in Taiwan and Texas.

Lin Moore, Elaine Zweig, & Sandra Morales

Students enrolled in university programs in Taiwan (N = 356) and community college programs in Texas (N = 260) were recruited with flyers distributed through campus learning platforms. Respondents accessed a secure online survey that included open-ended questions eliciting general knowledge about play and a 30-item scale that measured beliefs. Pre-service early childhood educators defined play as a source of learning and enjoyment. Although encouraged by their professors to use play as a method of teaching, students expressed concerns about children's safety and potential problems with behavior, as well as resistance from administrators and

parents. Recommendations for teacher preparation programs identified the importance of connecting play theories with practical applications for play-based curriculums.

A Sociological Model of Playfulness in competitive communities.

Nick Sherefkin

I propose that observing playfulness is essential for understanding changes in the size and composition of competitive communities. Synthesizing a motley collection of theories on play, I define a community's playfulness as the frequency with which members perform roles that affirm others' membership and encourage continued participation within the community's "game world". An agent-based model formalizes this definition and demonstrates how playfulness could affect a community's growth rate and the distribution of competitive skill. Results show how playfulness can sustain participation in otherwise unstable competitive communities. The playfulness of top performers is particularly determinative for community survival. I conclude by discussing how playfulness could be measured to better understand actual occupational, scientific, and online communities.

Session II

War Play for Peace: Harnessing Generic Toys for Global Impact.

Brian McCarty

The War Toys nonprofit organization has taken a radical approach to positively influencing children's play on a global scale – they are simply giving generic toymakers better designs and subsidizing their production. Factories, distributors, and retailers keep the revenue, and in exchange, War Toys gains access to millions of children around the world served by long-established markets. As pilot and proof of concept, War Toys has started with the ubiquitous "army man" and is fostering the addition of noncombatants – Frontline Rescuers, Combat Photojournalists, and Aid Workers – to military play sets sold worldwide. That small change, bolstered by free lesson plans and an educational boardgame, gives children more play options than "us versus them," while quietly promoting more peaceful ideals.

Embracing PLAY in K-16 teaching. Digital media as playful tool.

Miryam Espinosa-Dulanto

Media production as maker literacies provides opportunities for youth to critically engage with their favorite toys and media within teacher education programs and/or undergraduate studies. This session will examine how undergraduate students engage with critical media production and play-based literacies, particularly through play and filmmaking. By leveraging creative maker literacies, these students can address pervasive stereotypes in popular media. They do this by producing content that unpacks the complex meanings, representations, and toys found in action texts and imaginative play contexts. The ultimate goal is to create Public Service Advertisements (PSAs) to raise awareness about the harmful media stereotypes and the value of play.

Acting Confucians is Amazing!: Teaching Ancient Asian Philosophy to Gen-Z American Students through Role Playing Game.

Shu Wan

This article reviews my pedagogical experience teaching the Ancient Chinese philosophy of Confucianism in the undergraduate history course. Concerned about designing and deploying an alternative way of teaching world history at the University at Buffalo, this article consists of the following three sections. The first one introduced the game Becoming Confucians!, which I devised to further students' knowledge of ancient Chinese philosophy, especially Confucianism. During the game, a group of students roll the dice to determine to play one of Confucius's significant students appearing in the classical writing The Analects, including Zi Gong, Si Ma Niu, Zi Lu, Yan Yuan, Zi Zhang, and Zi Xia. Then, they choose to ask a question concerning The Analects. Another group of students played the role of Confucius in answering the question concerning The Analects. The

article's second section introduced the practice of the game in the classroom. When teaching the undergraduate course "Asian Civilization 1" at the University at Buffalo virtually, I organized the gameplay through the help of online platforms, such as Kahoot! and Padlet, which facilitate students' participation and role-playing. The last section of this article consists of a talk between me and one student in my classroom. The dialogical format enhances democracy in academic writing on pedagogy, and more importantly, it integrates students' perceptions and discussion on the pedagogical use of roleplaying games.

The Untapped Potential of LEGO Bricks for Later Life Play.

Natalia Kasperovich

There is significant evidence supporting the benefits of play for people of all ages. However, play is often considered to be frivolous and inappropriate for people in their middle and later years. We need to develop new approaches to overcome play's bad reputation and bring it into the lives of all adults, especially older adults. One of the ways to facilitate this change is to utilize non-traditional mediums. The Bricks for Better Brains© program used LEGO bricks to encourage older people to gradually adopt playful attitudes, embrace creativity, foster social connections, and improve their well-being. The results of an ongoing series of interventions and observations support the power of LEGO bricks as a medium for play in later life

Play and its connection to Vernacular architecture.

Daniel Ness

While little consensus exists on a definition of play, most researchers seem to agree that play is a catalytic process whereby certain organisms remain engaged in activities involving anticipatory behaviors for a certain period of time. Play exists in a variety of forms. Within the context of vernacular architecture, constructive play, which necessitates the use of visuospatial constructive play objects (e.g., blocks, bricks, planks, or natural objects like tree branches, roots, logs, or woodchips), is an indispensable pursuit that leads to the development of creative ideation. Thus, play is associated with a variety of traditions, which are dependent on culturally specific norms for determining patterns, conventions, or rules. This paper showcases the extent to which play and vernacular architecture elide.

Play, Animate, Innovate - Empowering Black Boys through Creative Computing and Co-Design.

Kareem Edouard

The ILLEST Lab reimagines STEM education for Black boys by centering creative computing, play, and codesign. Through projects like the Animation Studio, students engage in narrative design, 3D modeling, and stop-motion animation, blending technical skills with cultural storytelling. By emphasizing co-design, the lab ensures that Black boys have agency in shaping their learning experiences, fostering ownership, confidence, and collaboration. These initiatives transform STEM into an inclusive and dynamic space where creativity and cultural relevance thrive. Anchored in play and self-expression, the ILLEST Lab empowers Black boys as innovators and changemakers, bridging representation gaps and redefining possibilities in STEM education. This approach demonstrates the transformative potential of creative computing in fostering equity and representation

Supporting infants & Toddlers in risky play.

Joanna Spotts

So much of the conversation around risky play is focused on preschool aged children. What about infants and toddlers? This session will discuss how infant and toddler teachers can support their students in developmentally appropriate risky play. Strategies for discussing risky play with the

families of students. Objectives: Participants will be able to Describe risky play as it relates to infants/toddlers Implement risky play opportunities in the infant/toddler classroom Discuss the benefits of risky play and justify supporting risky play with families.

Session III

Play-Based Programs: Themes for Success.

Michael Kamen & Sydney Jackson

This research describes successful play-based educational programs. This in-depth analysis of several education settings reveals theoretical underpinnings; pedagogical approaches; structures; challenges; systems to maintain innovation; roles of teachers, parents, and administrators; community relations; self-assessment strategies of play-based programs; and suggestions for other school administrators and teachers. The presentation will briefly highlight methods of investigation, summarize case studies from schools in Denmark, the UK, New York City, and Central Texas, and discuss emergent themes. Themes in common include the importance and nature of professional development, the recognition of teaching as a playful act, a unified definition of play-based learning within each organization, and well-articulated and successfully implemented pedagogical approaches that place children's voices and learning as a priority over external achievement standards.

The Play's the Thing: Emotional Health Predicts Adult Play Orientation

Dara Greenwood & Doug Maynard

The present online survey study examined two new constructs of play, play fulfillment and play guilt, in concert with other measures of emotional well-being and the frequency and nature of entertainment media use. Participants ($n = 146$) were recruited using the Prolific participant data base. Results show that play fulfillment is predicted by positive indicators of emotional well-being (e.g., flourishing) whereas play guilt is predicted by negative indicators of emotional well-being (e.g., loneliness). Although frequency of using different forms of media was not related to play orientation, actively engaging with social media (posting, interacting) predicted play fulfillment. Results demonstrate the relevance of adult play to emotional wellbeing and underscore the need for further research on this topic.

Cultivating a Playwork Movement in the United States. [Workload](#)

Susan Chlebowska and Jonathan McCloud

This workshop invites participants to co-create a roadmap for establishing a Playwork movement in the United States. Drawing from international models, particularly established frameworks in the United Kingdom, the session will explore Playwork as an essential health intervention that supports children's holistic development. By fulfilling children's rights under the UN Convention - including their well-being, development, autonomy, and health - Playwork reinforces society's responsibility to uphold every child's right to play and thrive. Attendees will collaborate to outline steps for professionalizing Playwork in the US and brainstorm actionable outcomes. Leveraging the diverse expertise of conference participants, this workshop aims to ignite a sustainable Playwork movement dedicated to enriching American childhood experiences.

Adventure playgrounds in Houston: A Historical Study.

Deepti Kharod, John Sutterby, & Jill Wood

This research focuses on the history of a children's adventure playground experiment in Houston, Texas from the 1980s to the mid 1990s. The idea of adventure playgrounds was imported from Europe, where children were playing in old building sites that offered opportunities for outdoor risky play and construction play using discarded and donated materials. The Houston Adventure Playground Association began as a movement to develop an adventure playground. They later partnered with the Houston Independent School District and developed the adventure playgrounds as an afterschool program in two elementary schools. This presentation will draw on

primary source documents and address reasons for the creation and eventually the closure of the playgrounds, operations, funding, influencers, and feedback from parents, children, and staff.

Roll the dice: Play your way into student-centered teaching. Workshop

Marta Cabral

Come play! The goal of this presentation is to playfully consider aspects and strategies crucial to course design in higher-education or any other level. This workshop will invite participants to play a game called Playtocracy, learning and reflecting on possible strategies and considerations that can help them re-design their courses as semester-long narrative games. Playing this game will help you transform your courses into semester-long narrative games that place students at the center of adventures adaptable to any type of course. Consider ungrading strategies and game-design principles as you set up a transformative higher education course.

Session IV

Global Playful Concientización as Playful Praxis in Education.

Diana H. Cortez-Castro

This self-study presents the idea of "playful praxis" in teacher education, emphasizing the integration of reflection and action within hybrid teaching contexts through a social justice lens. It introduces the Global Playful Concientización process, aimed at equipping pre-service teachers (PSTs) with culturally responsive pedagogies facilitated by intentional play experiences. Highlighting the importance of reflective practices grounded in educators' vivencias, the study posits that playful learning can effectively challenge issues of injustice and discrimination in education. The objectives include analyzing how ongoing self-reflection shapes socially just educators, showcasing strategies for enhancing intercultural competence, and providing actionable insights for integrating playful pedagogies in teacher education. This research promotes playful learning to support equity and social justice in education.

Capitalizing on Young Children's Cultural and Linguistic Capital Through Dramatic Play.

Irasema Salinas-González

Exploring the intricacies of young emergent bilinguals as they engage in dramatic play activities sheds light on multiple dimensions of language development that materialize when they are intrinsically motivated to communicate with others using their background knowledge and entire linguistic repertoire (Arreguin, Salinas-Gonzalez & Alanis, 2018; Salinas-Gonzalez et al., 2019). Using Latino/a critical race theory (Delgado, 1995) as a lens, this ongoing research examines ways in which young children's translanguaging practices informed the design of culturally responsive sociodramatic play spaces by tapping into the linguistic and familial capital that children have acquired in the context of daily life within their communities (Yosso, 2005).

Children's politics in free play.

Ana Marjanovic-Shane

This presentation investigates the political dimensions of children's interactions within free play, focusing on their relationships, alliances, actions, and governance in their Communities of Players (CoPl). Drawing from my ongoing research conducted in a democratic school setting and other studies on children's play, I analyze political aspects of children's social actions, including inclusion and exclusion, power dynamics, and self-governance of the playgroups. By examining how children navigate social structures and authority within play, this work sheds light on the inherent political nature of play. The study addresses a gap in research on children's political actions in free play and the resulting forms of self-governance they create, highlighting the significance of these interactions for understanding agency and democratic principles in childhood.

Balancing Basic Research in Children's Play and Ethics: Navigating IRB

Smita Mathur

This roundtable addresses the unique ethical challenges and Institutional Review Board (IRB) requirements involved in conducting basic research on children's play. Play is essential for child development, and studying it can provide valuable insights into learning, socialization, and health. However, research with children necessitates careful consideration of ethical standards, privacy, and safety, especially when exploring naturalistic play environments. This discussion will focus on navigating IRB protocols, balancing the integrity of observational studies with child welfare, and ensuring that research outcomes remain impactful and applicable. Attendees will share experiences, strategies, and best practices for addressing IRB concerns while fostering innovative research on children's play. This session is ideal for researchers, practitioners, and IRB members interested in ethical, child-centered research methodologies.

Designing Language Learning Experiences through Culture-Driven, Playful Coding.

Ehean Kim

Affective language instruction necessitates innovative tools to enhance engagement and accessibility. This study examined how teachers utilized a visual coding platform to integrate playful coding and computational thinking into language learning. Participants included two teachers with varying coding backgrounds who attended a workshop focused on developing computational thinking skills. Data from workshop recordings and interviews revealed that the teachers incorporated cultural elements into their coding projects, fostering playful exploration.

Play as a Strategy to Foster Anti-bias and Inclusivity in Children.

Lorna Durrant & Krysta Murillo

Many parents and teachers find it difficult and uncomfortable to talk to children about race, bias, and inclusiveness, despite this being an essential part of parenting. Teaching children anti-bias and inclusive attitudes and skills is fundamental to learning acceptance of others. Research indicates that prejudice can begin around 4- to 5-years-old, while children of color as young as five years old notice and feel the negative impacts of racial stereotypes. Although adults may address racial disparities in open, age-appropriate conversations with children to reduce bias, these topics are often sensitive in nature. Therefore, play can be used as a low-stakes medium to address these topics. Play that fosters acceptance of racial inclusivity can include engaging picture books, storytelling, and role play to encourage awareness and acceptance.

At Play in School: Racial, Social, & Environmental Justice.

Tia Mathisen, Andrea Myers, & Jen Bradley

Activists, practitioners and researchers share how and why anti-racist, anti bias, and inclusive play looks like and matters in schools. During this interactive session, participants will explore and experience concrete practices and policies that center joy & play in the movements for social, racial, and environmental justice.

Session V

¡Vamos a Jugar con STEAM! Let's Play with STEAM! Workshop

Julia Cuevas

This session will empower educators and caregivers of emergent bilinguals to be STEAM-Powered by integrating play-based activities that promote Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Mathematic (STEAM) learning. Participants will learn strategies to create high-quality STEAM learning that focuses on emergent bilingual assets through an inquiry approach and the 21st century skills.

Beyond Reactivity: Play as a Path to Collective Power and Connection. *Workshop*

Carrie Lobman

As the world's conflicts deepen, it's easy to question whether play, with its roots in joy, exploration, and creation, has a place amidst such division and turmoil. This workshop proposes that play's generative power—its ability to transform divergent perspectives into something creative and constructive—may be exactly what we need. Using multimodal and interdisciplinary tools, participants will explore play as a way to move beyond oppositional stances, fostering open, collaborative engagement with challenging issues. This “laboratory of play” will invite attendees to experiment with creative practices that can live side-by-side with our individuated reactions, equipping them with tools to approach divisiveness in ways that builds connection, understanding, and collective power.

Play and Playful Design for Treatment of Mental Illness

Corinne Knox-Germans

This session will explore a research-based design proposed by the presenter for a psychiatric inpatient unit that has play built into the design. Patient outcomes in these units are often negative due to issues like lack of autonomy, under stimulation, and general stress about hospitalization. The presenter will discuss their proposed design for psychiatric units that has play and play therapy available to patients as well as encouraging play through the design of the built space of the unit. The presentation will examine how play is uniquely suited to solve current issues with psychiatric units and discuss the research that led to this conclusion and guided the design.

Parasocial interactions and relationships: Vicarious Play.

Vejoya Viren

This is an exploration of the emergence of parasocial interactions and relationships (PSIRs) among fans who engage in vicarious watching of content of their idols participating in playful activities. Parasocial interactions refer to one-sided relationships that fans develop with public figures, where the fan experiences a sense of connection, despite the lack of reciprocal engagement. The phenomenon has gained prominence in digital media, particularly with idol culture, where fans develop strong emotional bonds with idols through the consumption of mediated content. This research investigates how parasocial relationships form, deepen, and potentially influence fan play behavior, identity, and emotional well-being. Utilizing qualitative and quantitative methods, including content analysis and surveys, the study identifies key factors such as idol persona construction, viewer emotional investment, and community interaction that contribute to the development of PSIRs.

Saturday, March 1

Session I

Board Game Creation to Teach History of Architecture and Design.

Catherine Kendall

This presentation explores the use and benefits of integrating board game design as an active Project Based Learning strategy in History of Architecture and Design survey courses. While engaging student learning and retention of the language and framework of architecture, interiors, furniture, and prominent decorative arts of historical style periods to enhance creative problem solving is the primary goal, other benefits include enhancing critical thinking skills, building graphic presentation skills, and effective collaboration. Relevant literature of the benefits of student-centered use of board games as a learning tool, as well as methodology of board game development, case studies, and assessment criteria are reviewed. Findings suggest that gamification not only increases engagement but creates meaningful connections with historical content.

An Introduction to Sandtray Therapy for Processing Grief.

Clarissa Salinas & Eunice Lerma

The Covid pandemic resulted in many deaths. Clients are now experiencing high levels of trauma, stress, and isolation. Session will focus on effects from Covid and play therapy techniques to help children identify, express, and integrate traumatic feelings. This skill-building session will incorporate sandtray, expressive arts, and practical child centered techniques.

What is a VLE? An Indoor Play Area Based on Vygotsky's Social Learning Theory.

Hilda Medrano, Eva Alejandro, & Perla Olivares

Come to this session to learn how an old gym was conceptualized and turned into an indoor learning environment for an Early Head Start Program. The center-based environment was created to reflect the children's social and cultural backgrounds. Videos and pictures will be shared with the audience.

Everyday Medical Play and Scaffolding Children's Healthcare Knowledge.

Shannon Dier, Rachel Thibodeau-Nielsen, Alaina Dooley, & Maria Rueda Posada

Healthcare encounters are frequent in early childhood and often become a source of stress and anxiety for children and families. Medical play, which includes play with medical themes or toys and play with actual medical equipment, is typically used by professionals in hospital settings. This presentation discusses an exploratory study which observed how parents and preschool-age children played when provided with an opportunity for medical play outside of a healthcare situation. We found parents and children engaged in a high frequency of medical play and that many parents participated by guiding play and educating about medical items. Implications for building healthcare understanding and resilience through medical play in home and community settings are discussed.

Fostering Inclusive Play: Combating Bias and Promoting Diversity in Early Childhood.

Stephanie Reynolds

This workshop explores strategies for fostering anti-racist, anti-bias, and inclusive play in early childhood settings. Participants will gain practical tools to recognize and address biases, create diverse and welcoming environments, and support children's social and emotional development. Through hands-on activities, discussions, and real-world examples, attendees will learn how to incorporate inclusive toys, books, and activities that reflect varied cultural backgrounds and abilities. The workshop also emphasizes promoting empathy, respect, and positive peer interactions. Educators will leave with actionable strategies to cultivate a more inclusive and equitable play environment, empowering children to embrace diversity and challenge stereotypes from a young age.

Session II

Playing with Numbers: Choice, Joy, and Wonder in Mathematics Education.

Michael Kamen & Debra Plowman

Project Zero (Harvard University) has identified three elements that are typically present in playful learning. These are choice, wonder, and joy. In today's education climate with a focus on test preparation and covering discrete skills, teachers are asked to justify their instructional decisions. Many teachers face the daunting challenge of meeting a prescribed curriculum with rigid scope and sequence requirements while trying to maintain a playful pedagogical approach. In our workshop we will present tasks, games, challenges, and other play activities that promote children's innate joy and wonder as they explore mathematical concepts and make connections. Participants will engage in activities such as counting collections, choral counting, problem-solving through story problems, manipulative-based challenges, logic games, performances, and others.

Play Within Place: Arts + Geography for Communities of Learners.

Angela Dittmar

Telling stories, role-playing, and creating artworks about places on maps are perfect for reaching multiple curricular goals, fostering multigenerational play, and supports the holistic development of self be that of a child, an adult, or a community. With the increase of digital technology, screens, and GPS, essential skills like navigation, spatial thinking, and visualization often live in a growing abstract landscape. However, through integrating arts and geography, we can start to concretize this abstraction through meaningful interactions and play. This session will be interactive and collaborative. Participants will experience versatile arts integration strategies with geography that they may readily apply to their own educational or play-based goals after some customization to the specific attributes of their “place.”

The Playful Presence: Mindfulness Practices for Educators. Bringing Playfulness & Presence into Teaching and Life. (workshop)

Sara Ahangar Ahmadi

Teaching can be demanding, but integrating playfulness and mindfulness can transform both the educator’s well-being and the classroom environment. This hands-on, interactive workshop invites educators to explore simple, engaging practices that foster presence, creativity, and connection. Through playful activities and mindful reflection, participants will experience how small shifts in awareness can reduce stress, increase joy, and create more engaged, resilient classrooms. Educators will walk away with ideas and a felt sense of how playfulness and mindfulness can be woven into their teaching, making learning more dynamic, meaningful, and enjoyable for both themselves and their students.

PRESENTER BIOS

Akosua Addo is an associate professor of music education in the School of Music at the University of Minnesota. Fulbright Scholar Addo serves as the research chair of the Minnesota Society for Music Teacher Education. In addition to book chapters, Addo's research in teacher education and ethnographies of children's singing games has been presented at conferences and published in professional and research journals.

Alaina Dooley - University of Missouri, Human Development and Family Sciences

Ana Marjanovic-Shane, Independent Scholar, Deputy Editor-in-chief, Dialogic Pedagogy: A Journal for Study of Dialogic Education (<http://dpj.pitt.edu>). Interested in dialogic meaning-making (ethical ontological dialogism), democracy and freedom in education, and the dialogic theory of critical and creative authorship. Recent publications: Play Manifesto. In M. M. Patte, F. Brown, & A. Beresin (Eds.). 2024, Brian Sutton-Smith, Playful Scholar: A Centennial Celebration (Vol. 17, pp. 47-62); and Matusov, E., & Marjanovic-Shane, A. (2016). Dialogic authorial approach to creativity in education: Transforming a deadly homework into a creative activity. In V. Glaveanu (Ed.), The Palgrave Handbook of Creativity and Culture Research.

Andrea Myers (she/her) is the Head of School at Friends School Haverford and co-founder and active core member of Philly Children’s Movement. Andrea holds a master’s degree in elementary education from Lesley University and an MBA from Temple University.

Andrea Nikkole Campos, a bilingual school psychologist, brings five years of experience as a Licensed Specialist in School Psychology (LSSP) and holds a Master's degree in School Psychology from the University of Texas at San Antonio. Currently enrolled in School Psychology PhD program with a specialization in bilingual school psychology, Andrea is deeply committed to cultivating culturally responsive environments in education to create learning spaces and practices that recognize, respect, and integrate the diverse cultural backgrounds,

experiences, and perspectives of students and their communities.

Angela Dittmar is the Director of Teaching Artist Residencies at the Arts-Based Collaborative at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga, Angela Dittmar brings an extensive history facilitating arts-based learning engagements. She guides a roster of teaching artists in facilitating arts integration classroom residencies. She has presented on arts programs, techniques for fostering community amongst teaching artists, and equity initiatives through the arts. Lastly, she has served as faculty in the University's Honors College as well as in the Art Department. She holds a Master of Fine Arts from Hunter College, CUNY and Bachelor of Fine Arts and Psychology Minor from UTC.

Bhoomi K. Thakore is an Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology, and Associate Director, Asian and Asian American Studies, Department of Social and Critical Inquiry at the University of Connecticut. My research areas include inequalities, media sociology, and the scholarship of teaching and learning.

Brian McCarty is a Photographer, Fulbright Specialist, Board Member for the International Toy Research Association (ITRA), and the Executive Director of the War Toys® nonprofit organization. Built from a decade of fieldwork, War Toys uses play to safely confront the harsh realities of war. They promote peace around the world through art-therapy-based collaborations with war-affected children and programs fostering changes within the toy industry. Prior to War Toys, Brian spent two decades working in the industry for: Mattel, Hasbro, Disney, and Nickelodeon. His work has been covered by: The New York Times, Washington Post, Guardian, Wired, Reuters, and countless other publications.

Carrie Lobman, Ed.D., is associate professor at Rutgers University Graduate School of Education and the leader of education and research at the East Side Institute. Carrie is a sociocultural scholar and play movement leader. Her research examines the relationship between play, performance, learning and development for people of all ages. Carrie is the author or editor of three books including *Unscripted Learning: Using Improvisation across the K-8 Curriculum and Performance and Play: Play and Culture Series, Volume 11*. She has authored dozens of articles. She received her doctorate from Teachers College, Columbia University and is a past president of The Association for the Study of Play.

Catherine Kendall received an MFA in interior design from Virginia Commonwealth University, a BFA in interior design from Winthrop University, and a BA in Cultural Anthropology from Sweet Briar College. Her research interests lie in human behavior and the built environment, as well as the history of design. Before accepting her current position within the Interior Architecture and Design program at the UT Chattanooga in 2005, she previously taught Interior Design within the College of Architecture and Design at UT Knoxville, Mississippi State, and Virginia Commonwealth University's School of the Arts while attending graduate school.

Clarissa Salinas is an Assistant Professor of Counseling, Licensed Professional Counselor Supervisor, and Registered Play Therapist Supervisor with over 10 years of experience providing counseling services to children and adolescents. She has published journal articles in high quality journals with findings that have provided implications for professional counselors, counseling supervisors, and play therapists in practice.

Corinne Knox-Germans is an undergraduate student in the Department of Knowledge Integration at the University of Waterloo in Ontario, Canada focusing on supporting play through design of built spaces.

Daniel Ness's research focuses on the areas of curriculum reconceptualization, cognition, and their intrinsic relations to play. Using affordance theory in psychology, he developed the concept of visuo-constructive play objects (VCPOs), such as blocks and bricks, to underscore the diversity of constructive toys. Calling attention to the symbiotic interaction between personal agency and object, Ness extends affordance theory to demonstrate that use of VCPOs with higher levels of affordance may lead to deficits in higher-order thinking. His book, *Block Parties: Identifying Emergent STEAM Thinking Through Play* (Routledge) examines the efficacy of a wide array of VCPOs.

Dara Greenwood is an Associate Professor of Psychological Science, and current Program Director of Media Studies at Vassar College (Ph.D. in Social Psychology from UMass Amherst). Her research is broadly focused on the intersection of emotional well-being and engagement with entertainment media, with an emphasis on how affinity for media figures and genres are associated with individual differences in psychological tendencies (e.g.,

self and body image, belonging, attachment style). She has also studied gender roles, humor, and fame as they pertain to popular media culture.

Debora Wisneski is Community Chair of Early Childhood Education and Professor in Teacher Education at University of Nebraska-Omaha. Wisneski is the Past President of the Association for Childhood Education International and The Association for the Study of Play. She is co-author/ co-editor of texts such as, *Reconsidering the role of play in early childhood: Toward social justice and equity* (2019) and *The Developmental Benefits of Playgrounds* (2004). Wisneski leads a team of teacher educators and researchers at the University of Nebraska Omaha on play and assisted in the creation of the UNO PLAY Lab.

Debra Plowman, Associate Professor at Texas A & M University - Corpus Christi, Texas is interested in the intersection of play and mathematics education in the elementary classroom. She loves to share her love for mathematics with pre-service and in-service teachers.

Deepti Kharod is an Associate Professor at University of the Incarnate Word in San Antonio, Texas. Her background in early childhood and elementary teaching lay the foundation for her abiding love of playful learning, which has grown into an interest in play research. She enjoys creating play opportunities for her students and collaborating with community members and organizations. Deepti also serves as Book Review Editor for TASP and on the Advisory Board for the Joe L. Frost Play Research Collection.

Diana H. Cortez-Castro is an experienced educator, author, consultant, keynote speaker, and advocate for play with over 21 years of experience in the field. She teaches at a community college in South Texas, where she prepares future teachers to support diverse learners through innovative methods, such as *Global Playful Concientización*. As a strong advocate for children's right to play, she organizes Community Play Days and has co-authored several books. She provides professional development for educators at all levels in innovative teaching practices like *Radical Play* and serves on the TASP board. Additionally, she is the founder of ourglobalplaystory.com.

Doug Maynard is a Professor of Psychology at the State University of New York at New Paltz. He earned his Ph.D. in Industrial and Organizational Psychology from Bowling Green State University in 1998. As director of the Positive Play Lab, he studies the role and importance of play and playfulness in the lives of adults. He teaches courses in introductory psychology, statistics, play, and sleep and dreams.

Ed Gonsalves Ed specializes in the design, development and delivery of senior executive programs for high performance teams in entrepreneurial and large firms. He advises, consults and publishes in the area of strategy, cultural change and entrepreneurial learning.

Ehean Kim, a Ph.D. student at Penn State, focuses on educational technology, English, Spanish, Korean language acquisition, and instructional design.

Elaine Zweig is an Early Childhood Specialist with decades of successful experience in working with children of all ages and grade levels. Having taught as a professor and now, as an Educational Consultant, Dr. Zweig has presented over 50 workshops at local, state, national, and international training conferences to showcase early childhood education. She has authored and co-authored textbooks and reviewed books, articles, and technical reports. She believes that children develop a sense of self and learn to make sense of the world around them through play.

Elizabeth McWilliams Hewitt, is a behaviour consultant and educator, providing services to families raising a child or youth with developmental disability. Elizabeth also works as a sessional instructor at University of the Fraser Valley. Elizabeth implements her inclusive practice on the land with children and youth, with a focus on connection, relationships, and outdoor play as an integral part of well-being.

Ellen Beattie is a trailblazer in the educational realm who weaves the art of positive leadership with the science of learning into every project. At the University of Arizona Global Campus, she's not just an assistant professor; she's a guiding force in the Ph.D. in Education program, where she infuses doctoral curricula with innovation and mentors the next wave of educational pioneers. Before joining the university, Ellen led transformative educational services in roles from Director of Student Services to Chief of Adult Instructional Services. In 2020, the Online

Learning Consortium spotlighted Ellen's dedication to fostering inclusive learning communities with a prestigious award for Leadership in Equity and Inclusion in Online Learning. Her scholarly contributions center on the power of positive leadership, the magic of creativity, and the role of positive emotions in online learning environments. Ellen is passionate about blending cutting-edge research with hands-on practice, offering educators and leaders a treasure trove of strategies rooted in positive psychology, mindfulness, and the belief that every learning journey should be empowering and intentional.

Eunice Lerma is an Associate Professor of Counseling, Certified School Counselor, and Licensed Professional Counselor Supervisor. Her research interests include Latinos in counselor education, counseling at-risk and adjudicated youth, and effective school counseling with Latino students. Eunice.lerma@utrgv.edu

Hilda Medrano began her career as an early childhood education teacher in a bilingual program. She has worked as an educational consultant, a supervisor in public schools and currently, coordinates the graduate Early Childhood Education Degree program at the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley and teaches graduate courses. She has taught at four different universities throughout her career. She has also been responsible for obtaining funding to establish the UTRGV-CCP Early Head Start Program for the last eleven years.

Hiyori Akita Department of South Asia and Indian Ocean Studies Graduate School of Asian and African Area Studies (ASAFAS) Kyoto University.

Eva Alejandra has just completed 54 years of a career devoted to the enhancement of Early Childhood Education by ensuring that children are allowed to play as they learn. Her areas of expertise include developing learning spaces that promote learning through play. She has extensive experience working with teachers and future teachers as a University Instructor, an education consultant and as a former owner and director of an alternative teacher certification program.

Irasema Salinas-González has been a bilingual-early childhood education professional for over 30 years as a teacher of young children in preschool and kindergarten, a teacher of college students, and a teacher of in-service teachers. Her work focuses on developmentally, linguistically, and culturally appropriate practices for young dual-language learners, focusing on play-based learning.

Jen Bradley (she/they) is an activist, mother, community engaged scholar, educator, co-founder and active core member of the Philly Children's Movement. Jen is an Associate Professor in the Educational Studies Department at Swarthmore College who works with students, teachers, children, and families to center joy, build community, and organize for justice.

Jennifer N. Fassio is a Masters student in the Early Childhood Education Program at the University of Texas at San Antonio. She is interested in how risky play and nature-based play can be reintroduced as a primary pedagogy in Early Childhood Education.

Jill Wood is founding director of Adventure Play at The Parish School, an adventure playground in Houston, Texas on three acres established in 2008. She is co-founder of Bayou City Play, a playwork-based community outreach organization providing training and support to members of the Houston Metro Area. She is also a school librarian and mom to an 11-year-old who is the house expert on play.

Joanna Spotts is a nature-based educator and risky play advocate based in Vermont. She has taught in a variety of situations including in an inner-city charter school and an rural one-room schoolhouse. After finding her niche teaching preschool, she discovered that play made everything easier to teach. While completing her doctoral work, Dr. Joanna discovered that she had a passion for Nature-based learning and risky play. Dr. Joanna's favorite part of presenting is the positive impacts that educators bring back to their practices.

John Sutterby is an Associate Professor at The University of Texas San Antonio. He is interested in children's play and play environments as well as children's literature and programs for English Language Learners. He is a past president of the Association for the Study of Play.

Jonathan McCloud is an Assistant Professor of Education at Roanoke College. He received his PhD in Curriculum & Instruction with emphasis on Educational Psychology from Virginia Tech in 2015. His research and teaching

have included topics such as Play and Playwork, the relationship between play and public health. Jonathan's scholarship is linked by an expression of respect and care for the individual, and he is most interested in ways that play is fostered through democratic structures and agentive practices. Jonathan is a PARS Playwork Licensed Trainer, a former classical guitarist, and he enjoys learning about Mister Rogers, cooking, and gardening.

Julia G. Cuevas Guerra is an Assistant Professor in early childhood at the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley (UTRGV). She has over 10 years of experience in early childhood and bilingual education as a preschool teacher, mentor and coach to pre-service and in-service teachers. Her research focuses on developmentally, linguistically, and culturally appropriate practices for young Latino dual language learners, emergent biliteracy development, play-based learning and using the practice-based coaching model with early childhood educators.

Katherine Marshall is a doctoral student, educator, and storyteller passionate about fostering literacy and creativity in her community. With over a decade of curriculum building and teaching experience, she strives to curate learning environments that spark curiosity and critical thinking. Her M.A. in Reading and Literacy deepened her understanding of how vital it is to connect with learners and how they can flourish in sociocultural environments that focus on the whole child.

Katelyn Clark holds a PhD in Early Childhood from Rutgers University. She has taught in early childhood, elementary, and higher education settings for close to twenty-four years. Her forthcoming book, *Play Stories: Using Your Play Memories and Perspectives to Inform Teaching Practice*, is the culmination of two of her research studies. She is currently an Assistant Professor at SUNY New Paltz

Katie Shine and Kayleigh Haugh. We are both Certified Occupational Therapy Assistants (COTA). We have worked in pediatric therapy for 5 years and currently work together in a special education preschool with students aged 2-5. We service children with a variety of disorders including autism, sensory processing disorders, ADHD, learning disabilities, and many more. A huge struggle we were seeing in our students was their ability to feel regulated throughout the day. This led to meltdowns, discomfort, and overall impacted their success in the classroom. We have helped our students feel more regulated, increased their ability to self-regulate, and increased their success in the classroom all through sensory play! Through implementing sensory play not only in our therapy sessions but throughout the classrooms in our school we have been able to see the ripple of success it has caused for our students and our teachers!

Krysta Murillo is an associate professor in the School of Education at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga. Her focus area is early childhood education, and her research interests include preschool education in Belize, Central America; play in the early years, home & school partnerships, and access, engagement and support for underrepresented groups in teacher education programs.

Lars Ellwanger, is an undergraduate student at the State University of New York at New Paltz, majoring in industrial-organizational psychology.

Lin Moore is a Professor of Early Childhood Education at Texas Woman's University. She teaches courses in early childhood curriculum, play, action research, and leadership. Research interests include perceptions of play, parental engagement, English language learners, and mentoring programs. She edited an Early Childhood Education monograph, authored 35 articles/technical reports, and presented 100+ conference sessions. Recently Dr. Moore co-authored a textbook for adoption by community colleges. Awards include Texas Teacher Educator of the Year, Who's Who Among America's Teachers, and Senior Fellow Advanced HE.

Lorna Durrant has a Ph.D. in Family Studies and is a Certified Family Life Educator. She is an Assistant Professor in the School of Education and Chair of the Child and Family Studies program at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga. Her research interests include interracial families, parent-child relationships, racial socialization, and parenting education. She has taught courses related to parent education, child and adolescent development, family relations, family financial planning, and program development.

Lucia Daher is an undergraduate student at the State University of New York at New Paltz, majoring in psychology. Co-Presenter: Doug Maynard, State University of New York

Marilyn Nicol is an assistant professor of literacy at Southwestern University, and a former Prekindergarten teacher. Her research interests include early literacy development, critical disability studies in education

Marta Cabral works with people of all ages exploring play & art materials, processes, and ideas in diverse settings. mARTa's 20+ years of teaching young children inspire her work in teacher-education and research on ownership of learning, pedagogies of listening, and art-play-based learning. As an Associate Professor at the City University of New York, mARTa works with future classroom teachers. As speaker and consultant, mARTa works with organizations worldwide to create and strengthen playful artistic engagement worldwide.

Michael Kamen, Professor and Chair, Education Department, Southwestern University, Texas. Michael has taught at both progressive and traditional schools and earned education degrees from Stony Brook University (elementary education), Bank Street College of Education (supervision and administration), and The University of Texas (science education). His courses include Elementary Science Methods, Elementary Math Methods, Educational Technology, Innovative Schools, and Schools at Play. His research interests include creative dramatics in science teaching, authentic assessment, environmental education, lesson study, and play-based learning.

Michael M. Patte, Ph.D., Professor of Early Childhood Education Program Coordinator – Child Life Specialist & Playwork Certificate/Minor Programs Bloomsburg University Visiting Scholar – Play, Education, Toys, and Languages (PETaL) – Erasmus Mundus Joint Masters Degree Program University of Cordoba (Spain), Polytechnic Institute of Lisbon (Portugal), & Marmara University (Turkey) Co-Editor – The International Journal of Play
<https://www.tandfonline.com/toc/rijp20/current>

Miryam Espinosa-Dulanto (Lic. Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú; M.A. & Ph.D. University of Wisconsin-Madison) is an Associate Professor at the Department of Bilingual & Literacy Studies, University of Texas- Rio Grande Valley. Miryam is an active scholar with a distinguished record of teaching, service, and professional activity. Her teaching and research draw on decolonial indigenous feminist research methodologies. It is recognized by being transnational in scope yet intimately collaborative using poetry, testimonios, ethnography and art-based qualitative methodologies. Miryam's scholarly and artistic publications appear both in leading academic journals, handbooks, peer reviewed books, and regional/local publications that evidence the broad interdisciplinary, community based, and intellectual curiosity of her engagement.

Monique Goerzen, Associate Professor, University of the Fraser Valley. She is the Early Childhood Education Program Chair and associate professor at University of the Fraser Valley, an elementary school teacher, an early childhood educator, and outdoor adventure facilitator with youth and young adults. Monique is passionate about the value of play in her personal and professional life, motivating others to appreciate the wonder of learning through outdoor pedagogy.

Myae Han, Ph.D. is a professor in the Department of Human Development and Family Sciences at the University of Delaware, a past president of The Association for the Study of Play (TASP) and a past chair of Early Education and Child Development SIG at the American Educational Research Association (AERA). She is a coeditor of Play & Culture Studies V. 15, Play and Curriculum, and V. 16 Play and Literacy. Her research includes a play-based intervention, early language and literacy development, professional development of early childhood teachers.

Natalia Kasperovich, MS, AAS, received her Masters of Science (ChE) degree in Russia and AAS (Gerontology) degree from Portland Community College. Three years ago she created Bricks for Better Brains®, a cognitive program for older people that she is implementing in different communities in the Portland, OR metropolitan area. Natalia has extensive volunteer experience with older people. She believes in the importance of play across the lifespan and works on overcoming assumptions about the nature and value of play in the later years.

Nick Sherefkin is a Sociology PhD candidate at Stanford University. He studies game play as the most basic unit of intentional social construction. Game players seek to engineer specific social situations and sociologists can learn from their folk expertise. His dissertation examines how features of game play facilitate or inhibit community formation and change. Outside academia, he enjoys reading/exploring/wrestling with his two kids and (surprise) playing games.

Olga S. Jarrett, PhD, Professor Emerita, Georgia State University (GSU). Play researcher and evaluator. Former president of both The Association for the Study of Play (TASP) and the American Association for the Child's right to play (IPAUSA), Co-editor of *Play and Social Justice: Equity, Advocacy, and Opportunity* (2023), and recipient of the Martin Luther King Faculty Torch of Peace Award (GSU) and awards from TASP, US Play Coalition, IPAUSA, and the NAEYC Play, Policy, and Practice Interest Forum.

Perla Olivares is an early childhood teacher mentor for teachers working with infants and toddlers. She guides and supports teachers by providing reflective feedback and professional assistance. She helps them navigate the complexities of classroom management, curriculum planning, and instructional strategies.

Rica Ramírez is an Assistant Professor in the Interdisciplinary Learning and Teaching Department at the University of Texas at San Antonio. As an Educational Psychologist, she conducts applied research within the context of early childhood specifically focusing on the Latino population residing in the United States. The purpose of her research agenda is two-fold: 1.) To identify the way maternal responsiveness impacts young Latino children's language development, and 2.) To determine how external factors (i.e., home and school) influence the school readiness development of young Latino children.

Robert Jarrett: BS Chem. Engr., MS San-Pub. Health Engr., MS Geol., and GA Env. Engr. License. Work: Pittsburg Water Dept., WHO Sanitary Engr., US Army (28 yrs.- 12 as Sr. Fellow Army Env. Policy Inst.). Pubs.: *Teaching with Toys: Scientific Inquiry through Play* (2020); *The Woodbury Structure: Remains of a Late Proterozoic(?) Peak-Ring Impact Crater in West-Central Georgia, USA* (2010), thesis on Oldupai Gorge geoaerchaeology, various others, like environmental impacts of war. Wide foreign work and travel.

Ruth Guirguis Ed.D, is a professor of the Teacher Education Department at BMCC/CUNY and President of The Association for the Study of Play (TASP). Her research and authored articles and books are primarily focused on dual language learners' association between self-regulation and play and pedagogical practices that support students in higher education.

Sara A. Ahmadi, Ph.D., is a Professor of Practice in the Department of Teaching and Learning at the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley (UTRGV). She earned her Ph.D. in Curriculum and Instruction from Ohio University in 2016. Dr. Ahmadi specializes in Contemplative Studies, with a research focus on the potentials and possibilities of presence experience in teacher education. Her work explores mindfulness-based approaches to teaching and learning, and she has published papers on the ways and impacts of incorporating Presence Experience in Teacher Education in different journals.

Sarah Derven is an Outreach Librarian in Saratoga Springs, New York, specializing in services for older adults and residents of senior living communities. With 14 years of experience in public libraries and two years in her current role, she is dedicated to supporting the often isolated population of older adults. As a new TimeSlips facilitator, Sarah is passionate about engaging individuals living with dementia through creative storytelling. She holds a BA from Barnard College, an M.Ed. from Lehman College, and an MSLIS from the University at Albany.

Sandra Morales is a Faculty member of The School of Education at Dallas College. Dr. Morales enjoys teaching and supervising teacher candidates. She has authored several articles in the field of Early Childhood and presented at local, state, and national training conferences to showcase early childhood trends and teacher education. Her goal as an educator is to promote positive learning and spark learner enthusiasm and provide a strong foundation for lifelong learning and teacher education.

Shannon Dier is an Assistant Professor in the School of Family and Consumer Sciences at Texas State University. As a Certified Child Life Specialist, Dr. Dier utilized play to support children's developmental needs and coping during hospitalization challenging healthcare situations. Now as a researcher, she is interested in exploring the potential of medical play in everyday settings to promote healthcare understanding and support children and families to manage primary care encounters.

Sharon M. Peck, Phd. is an associate professor of Literacy in the Ella Cline Shear School of Education at the State University of New York at Geneseo .

Smita Mathur is a Professor within the Department of Early Elementary & Reading in the College of Education at James Madison University, Virginia. Her research interests are related to cultural perspectives on children's play and conducting basic research on children's play. She served as the president of TASP in 2019-20

Stephanie Kuntz is a Ph.D. candidate in Human Development and Family Sciences at the University of Delaware. She holds a M.S. and B.S. in Child Development from the University of La Verne. Stephanie has worked at NAEYC accredited Child Development Centers. She has also worked as an Early Intervention Home Visitor utilizing parent-coaching to support children 0-3 with developmental delays or at high risk of developing them and their families. Her research aims to help promote positive outcomes and resilience in young children with disabilities and their families.

Stephanie Reynolds is a part-time lecturer at the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, specializing in bilingual education and child development. She holds a Master's in Bilingual/ESL Education from Texas A&M, a Master's in Early Childhood Education from The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, and a B.S. in Health Education with a minor in Biology from The University of Texas Pan-American. Her research explores multilingualism's impact on early literacy, culturally responsive health education, and parental engagement in bilingual education. Stephanie is dedicated to advancing educational equity and fostering diverse, inclusive learning environments.

Susan Chlebowsky is an early childhood play and nature-based educator, consultant and teacher trainer. She has UK-based Playworker and Forest School Leadership training, is the founder/director of 2 nature preschools, and served as a Forest School Guide at an urban public school in Philadelphia. She works with universities, community leaders and childcare providers to provide professional development and promote inclusion, equity and access to nature. In October 2022, in acknowledgment for her lifetime achievements in advocating for the Child's Right to Play, she was awarded the Doctor of Play award by the International Play Association/USA.

Sydney Jackson, Elementary Education major and student research assistant, Southwestern University, Texas. In addition to her academic course load, Sydney is a member of the Southwestern University tennis team.

Tabitha Dell'Angelo is an educator, writer, and performer with a background in improv acting and stand-up comedy. Dell'Angelo has co-edited **Using Photography and Other Arts-Based Methods with English Language Learners** and contributed numerous journal articles focused on creative and arts-based approaches to education. Their work, including recent publications on arts integration and sociopolitical issues in education, explores innovative methods to empower teachers and foster student connections. A passionate advocate for arts in the classroom, Dell'Angelo combines humor and creative expression to engage audiences and encourage educators to reimagine traditional pedagogies, particularly in culturally responsive and high-needs educational settings.

Tia Mathisen (she/her) is the Executive Director for Playworks in Pennsylvania, a co-founder and active core member of the Philly's Children's Movement, and a mom to three. Tia is a social justice advocate, and facilitator with a master's degree in Organizational Leadership. She is genuinely interested in the common good of humanity and a forever supporter of the underdog.

Tori K. Flint is an Associate Professor of Literacy & Early Childhood Education at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette. She is also the Co-Founder and Co-Director of the Louisiana Center for Research and Education on Languages and Literacies. Broadly, her research bridges early literacies, play, children's literature, and multimodality. She believes that education should be joyful and that we should listen to and learn from the brilliance of children.

Tugce B. Arda Tuncdemir Ph.D. (she/her), is an Assistant Professor at the School of Behavioral Sciences and Education, Penn State Harrisburg. Her research and teaching focus on social-emotional learning, play, improvisation, and culturally responsive teaching. She was awarded the NAEYC Walter F. Drew Emerging Play Scholar Award in 2018 and was the President of The Association for the Study of Play for 2022-2023.

Xiangyou Shen is Assistant Professor at Oregon State University and Director of the Health, Environment, and Leisure (HEAL) Research Lab. With over a decade of research in adult play and playfulness, she developed the Interactionist Framework for Playfulness Research and the Adult Play and Playfulness Assessment Battery, which includes the Adult Playfulness Trait Scale, Psychological Situations for Play Scale, and Playful State Scale. Her

research investigates play and playfulness as a transformative pathway to enhance learning, creativity, nature engagement, psychological wellbeing, and personal flourishing. Dr. Shen recently launched the Playful Path to Parenting program, which integrates theoretical and empirical insights from adult and child play research to promote playful approaches in family engagement.

Vejoya Viren is a Professor of Early Childhood Studies in the Department of Human Development & School Services at the University of Texas- Rio Grande Valley. Her primary research focus is children's play, conflict, and identity formation. 22 years of straddling geopolitical, linguistic, and racial borders while working at the US-Mexico border has significantly impacted her research. She turns to indigenous methods/methodologies to examine identities of self, on subjects like the quest for "home", gastronomic yearnings, decolonial awakenings, memory archives of lived experiences, and the need for more authentic ways of gathering and sharing knowledge.

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SOUTH PADRE ISLAND, TX

Welcome to the newly rebranded, full-service Beach Resort at South Padre Island, an IHG Hotel! Our beachfront hotel is in close proximity to the South Padre Island Convention Center, Cameron County Amphitheater-Event Center, SpaceX Launch Facility, and numerous local attractions and restaurants. We offer over 15,000 square feet of flexible meeting space to host corporate or social events, with the largest rooftop, open air event venue accommodating up to 600 persons. We have three outdoor swimming pools: one adjacent to our Seaside Bar & Grill that's open daily for breakfast and dinner, and the other is a heated pool with a swim up bar!

Resort Services

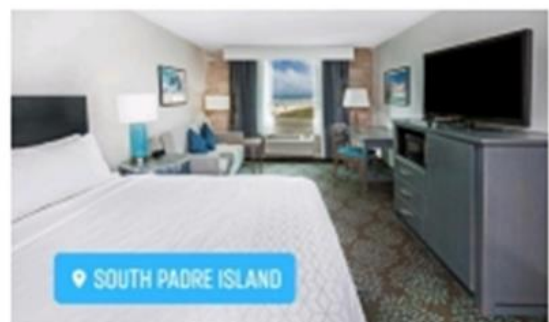
Seaside Bar & Grill with ocean view
Azul Restaurant & Bar (Main Lobby)
Complimentary Wi-Fi throughout the resort
Three swimming pools
Outdoor heated pool with swim-up bar at Palapa
Complimentary open surfaced parking lot/ Free Parking
Beachfront access
Coin operated washers and dryers available
Two Tesla Supercharger stations
Eight Standard Tesla charging stations

Guest Rooms

221 Deluxe Guestrooms
Pillow Top Mattress & Upscale bedding
All rooms feature Keurig Coffee Makers
Iron & Board
Blow Dryer
32 inch flat screen TV with premium cable
Microwave and mini fridge
IHG Rewards available

Hotel Contact Information

100 Padre Blvd.
South Padre Island, Texas 78597
956-426-9066



USEFUL INFORMATION

Transportation to SPI:

Both airports (Brownsville & Harlingen) have rental car companies available. If you don't want to rent a car, there are private companies that pick up and drop off at both airports:

- ✓ Lisa Vega's Island and Airport Shuttle: (956) 801-8937 or (432) 703-8032
- ✓ Ride Me, LLC: (956) 410-9712
- ✓ Airport Shuttle Service: (972) 400-7014
- ✓ SPI Surf Shuttle: (956) 443-1406
- ✓ SPI Shuttle & Tours: (956) 621-8647
- ✓ Ric's Rideshare: (956) 903-8100



Places to eat (a personally biased list):

- ✓ Meatballs Café for good food. SPI
- ✓ Padre Island Brewing Co. SPI
- ✓ Gabriella's Pizza. SPI
- ✓ Grapevine Café. SPI
- ✓ Café on the Beach. SPI
- ✓ Los Tortugas. Port Isabel
- ✓ Isabela's Café Port Isabel

There are a whole lot of other fun places ... I just haven't been to them yet 😊

Places of Interest:

- ✓ Sea Turtle Inc
- ✓ South Padre Island Birding and Nature Center
- ✓ UTRGV's Coastal Study Lab
- ✓ Dolphin watch
- ✓ Pirate ship
- ✓ SpaceX



**Thank you for your
Participation in
TASP 2025**

**See you again
in
TASP 2026**

