



Scaling Playful Learning: How Civic Infrastructure Can Support Young Learners

December 15, 2020
3:00-4:30 ET

Co-Moderator and Presenter



Helen Shwe Hadani

Fellow – Global Economy and Development, Center for Universal Education
Fellow – Metropolitan Policy Program, Anne T. and Robert M. Bass Center for Transformative Placemaking

The Brookings Institution

An expert in early childhood and creativity development, Dr. Hadani designs and evaluates products and environments that promote children’s curiosity and love of learning. As a fellow at the Brookings Institution, she leads the Playful Learning Landscapes project — an initiative that brings together the fields of developmental science and placemaking with the goal of improving child and community outcomes.

Prior to joining the Brookings Institution, Helen spent 20 years in research and education settings applying her knowledge of early childhood development to creating innovative learning experiences for children and families. She served as the director of research at the Bay Area Discovery Museum where she guided program and exhibit development and authored parent- and teacher-facing publications on creative thinking and child development. As part of and prior to that role, Helen consulted for toy, technology, and media companies, including The Walt Disney Company, Sesame Workshop, Apple, LEGO, Hasbro, Fisher-Price, and Mattel.

Helen holds a BA in Cognitive Science from the University of Rochester and a Ph.D. in Psychology from Stanford University. She currently serves on advisory boards for the LEGO Foundation and Goddard Schools.

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Presenters



Anna White

Program Manager, Early Childhood Success
National League of Cities (NLC)

As a Program Manager for the Early Childhood Success team in the Institute for Youth, Education and Families at NLC, Anna is primarily responsible for overseeing the Early Learning Nation initiative, designed to help support municipal leaders in building strong early childhood systems that can support young children and their families.

Anna has over a decade of early childhood systems building experience at the local, state and national levels. Before joining NLC, Anna worked for the District of Columbia’s Office of the State Superintendent

of Education, supporting the Quality Improvement Network, which leveraged DC's Early Head Start/Child Care Partnership grant to build a neighborhood-based quality improvement system for early childhood development providers. Prior to that, Anna served as the Director of State Affairs for the National Head Start Association and worked for several years in the Alaska State Department of Education's Head Start Collaboration Office.

Anna holds a BA in Philosophy from The George Washington University.

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Bosmat Sfadia-Wolf

Director, Community Planning and Development Unit
City of Tel Aviv-Yafo, Israel

Bosmat joined the Tel Aviv – Yafo municipality to lead the Urban95 program three years ago. The program is a partnership between the municipality, the Bernard van Leer Foundation and the Tel Aviv Foundation. The Urban95 program incorporates a focus on early childhood development into the planning and management of the city. Prior to joining the municipality, Bosmat gained experience as an architect and specialized in leading urban renewal projects.

Born and raised in Tel Aviv, Bosmat now raises her two young children in the 'nonstop city.' Bosmat holds a B.Arch. from Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design (Jerusalem) and a MA in Housing and Urbanism from the Architectural Association School of Architecture (London).

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Dea Wright

Director, Office of Early Childhood Initiatives (OECI)
City of Milwaukee, WI

Dea works with all stakeholders living, playing, or working in the city to advance early care and education. Under her leadership, Dea has made lasting national partnerships with organizations working on behalf of young children and families. Collaborations with the Laundry Cares Foundation led to Wisconsin's first-ever Family, Read, Play, and Learn space inside a Milwaukee laundromat. Her work with Too Small To Fail expanded literacy-rich areas to children's court waiting rooms. The accomplishments earned Milwaukee the Laundry Literacy Coalition 2020 Summit Award for Outstanding Partnership.

Dea previously spent six years at Milwaukee Public Schools as a before- and after-school Supervisor, then Manager for over 55 programs. She was instrumental in increasing the quality ratings for programs based on Wisconsin's quality rating improvement system. She worked for both Dane and Milwaukee County Head Start, taught toddlers at Madison and Milwaukee Area Technical Colleges, and worked for the University of Wisconsin - Milwaukee's Children Center, receiving recognition for her leadership and professionalism.

Dea Wright is the proud mother of six children with her husband of 23 years. Dea earned an Associate in Applied Science Degree in Child Care and Development, a BS in Education, and a MA in Teaching. A native of Danville, IL, Dea has lived most of her life in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

Early childhood development remains near and dear to Dea's heart because it's prime time to boost babies' brains and prime time to support parents in their role.

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Commentator



Siobhan Reardon

Principal
Riverfront Associates, LLC

Siobhan O'Loughlin Reardon is a non-profit executive with 30+ years of large urban public library administrative and fundraising experience and non-profit board participation.

Ms. Reardon was the first woman to serve as the Free Library of Philadelphia's President and Director in the organization's 115-year history. After joining the Free Library in 2008, Ms. Reardon spearheaded the Library's initiative to redirect traditional services provided by the Library into an organization that is focused on the people served and not the books on the shelves. The library pivoted outward to build relationships and community by being more open and welcoming of community input and continuous improvement. Ms. Reardon's Building Inspiration: 21st Century Libraries Initiative provided for a multi-million dollar public/private partnership to improve upon and enhance physical and programmatic changes necessary to present a viable 21st Century library organization. Notable programmatic enhancements included serving as the backbone agency for the City's Read By 4th Campaign, which focuses on ensuring children are reading on grade level by fourth grade.

Ms. Reardon also served as Executive Director of the Westchester (NY) Library System, a 38-member cooperative library system. Prior to that, she was Deputy Executive Director of the Brooklyn Public Library, serving as Chief Operating Officer of the nation's fifth largest library system. She also served as Acting Executive Director and Director of Finance, responsible for the Library's \$85 million annual budget.

Ms. Reardon began her library career at New York Public Library, where she served as the budget director for the organization's \$185 million annual budget. She holds a B.A. from SUNY Purchase, an M.A. from Fordham University in International Political Economy and Development, and an M.L.S. from the Palmer School of Library Science at Long Island University. Before joining the New York Public Library, Ms. Reardon served in financial roles at Pinkerton, Inc., and The Borden Company.

Siobhan Reardon serves on a number of Boards in Philadelphia and nationally and was named Library Journal's Librarian of the Year in 2015, among other recognitions.

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