



Meeting Families Where They Are

Leveraging Spaces to Advance Early Learning and Literacy

July 21, 3–4:30 pm ET/12–1:30 pm PT



Helen Shwe Hadani

Fellow – Global Economy and Development, Center for Universal Education
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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 Bachelor of Arts in Cognitive Science from the University of Rochester and a Doctorate in Psychology from Stanford University. She currently serves on advisory boards for the LEGO Foundation and Goddard Schools.

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Brenna Hassinger-Das

Assistant Professor, Psychology Department
Pace University

Brenna Hassinger-Das, Ph.D., is an Assistant Professor of Psychology at Pace University. Her research examines children’s play and learning in home, school, and community contexts, particularly for children experiencing poverty. Her areas of expertise encompass early STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) and early language and reading skills. She is particularly interested in investigating the role of play and games for learning. She is committed to translating her research for use by the public through community-based research projects as well as blog posts and commentaries featured in outlets such as The Huffington Post as well as additional local outlets.

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Jane Park Woo

Director
Too Small to Fail

Jane Park Woo is the director of Too Small to Fail where she leads the initiative’s strategic partnerships with national nonprofit organizations, associations, and corporations. She recently served as an early childhood education consultant, working with nonprofits and media organizations to develop research-based programs for young children and families. Jane was previously the Associate Director of Content in the Education, Research, and Outreach department at Sesame Workshop, the nonprofit organization behind Sesame Street. In that role, she designed various educational initiatives across media platforms and managed partnerships to improve the health and well-being of children ages zero to five. Jane holds an M.A. in developmental psychology from Teachers College, Columbia University and a B.A. in communications from the University of California at San Diego.

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