

# The Effect of Play on the Brain

Co-Hosted by UConn's Collaboratory on School & Child Health and UConn's Neag School of Education — and featuring expert Jaci VanHeest



Join us for a Twitter Chat:

“The effect of play  
on the brain”

Thursday, February 15<sup>th</sup>  
1 - 2 PM EST

#brainplaychat

**UConn** | NEAG SCHOOL  
OF EDUCATION



Welcome, everyone, to our [#brainplaychat](#) [#TwitterChat](#)! Thx for joining us for today's conversation, focused on the effect of [#play](#) on the [#brain](#). Be sure to use the hashtag [#brainplaychat](#) on each of your tweets so that we can capture all your great insights! Let's get started! [pic.twitter.com/hvacG7uADA](https://pic.twitter.com/hvacG7uADA)

 NEAG SCHOOL @UConnNEAG · 2 HOURS AGO



We're proud to introduce you first to our illustrious co-host, [@UConnCSCH](#), known as the Collaboratory on [#School](#) & [#Child #Health](#) here [@UConn](#)! You can learn more about their fantastic work at [csch.uconn.edu](http://csch.uconn.edu). [#brainplaychat](#) [pic.twitter.com/XR4OEhuq34](https://pic.twitter.com/XR4OEhuq34)

 NEAG SCHOOL [@UCONNNEAG](#) · 2 HOURS AGO



We are also very fortunate to have w/us associate prof [@JaciVanHeest](#), our featured expert today & resident [#knowledge](#) queen 👑 on such topics as [#childhood](#) [#obesity](#), [#PhysEd](#), [#exercise](#), elite [#athletes](#), & more. Read more about her at [education.uconn.edu/person/jaci-va...](http://education.uconn.edu/person/jaci-va...) [#brainplaychat](#) [pic.twitter.com/1mjLiizcKL](https://pic.twitter.com/1mjLiizcKL)

 NEAG SCHOOL @UConnNeag · 2 HOURS AGO






**Neag School**  
@UConnNeag

If you haven't had a chance to watch the [@UConnCSCH](#) video feat. [@JaciVanHeest](#)'s talk, titled "The Boy Who Learned How to Play," you can do so following the chat to learn more about all that we are discussing today. You can find the video @ [ow.ly/TioV3oi5L3I](https://ow.ly/TioV3oi5L3I) [#brainplaychat](#)

 2 HOURS AGO



**Neag School**  
@UConnNeag

Is everyone ready for a great discussion about the effect of [#play](#) on the [#brain](#)?         
   Let's turn it over to [@UConnCSCH](#)! [#brainplaychat](#)

 2 HOURS AGO



**UConn CSCH**  
@UConnCSCH

We'll be asking some questions that are for [@JaciVanHeest](#) and some that anyone can answer so feel free to chime in! [#brainplaychat](#)

2 HOURS AGO



**UConn CSCH**  
@UConnCSCH

Q1. Let's get started! Please take a minute to introduce yourself and why you're interested in this topic [#brainplaychat](#)

2 HOURS AGO



**Neag School**  
@UConnNeag

[@UConnCSCH](#) A1. We're [@UConnNeag](#), the Neag School of Education at [@UConn](#). Here to support our fabulous professor [@JaciVanHeest](#) & co-host [@UConnCSCH](#), & excited to learn more about the effect of [#play](#) on the brain. [#brainplaychat](#)

2 HOURS AGO



**Rebecca A. Campbell**  
@RCampbellAnthro

[#brainplaychat](#) What are the biological/social mechanisms behind increased school performance due to play? And what one piece of advice would you give to teachers?

AN HOUR AGO



**Jaci VanHeest**  
@JaciVanHeest

[@RCampbellAnthro](#) .[@RCampbellAnthro](#) Research supports changes in frontal lobe of the brain activity and enhanced executive function [#brainplaychat](#)

AN HOUR AGO



**Jaci VanHeest**

@JaciVanHeest

[@RCampbellAnthro](#) .[@RCampbellAnthro](#) Teachers should take a few moments throughout the day and allow students to move around the classroom or have creative space to engage in movement  
[#brainplaychat](#)



AN HOUR AGO



**Rebecca A. Campbell**

@RCampbellAnthro

I've attended PD from [@KaganOnline](#) where movement is encouraged to increase oxygen and glucose to the brain. Could that be in addition to frontal lobe and other changes you mention?  
[#brainplaychat](#)



AN HOUR AGO



**Jaci VanHeest**

@JaciVanHeest

[@RCampbellAnthro](#) [@KaganOnline](#) .[@RCampbellAnthro](#). You are correct. There are many benefits of play where the heart rate increases and oxygen and fuel to the brain are also increased. It is a positive environment for brain function. [#brainplaychat](#)



AN HOUR AGO



**Jaci VanHeest**

@JaciVanHeest

[@RCampbellAnthro](#) [@KaganOnline](#) .[@RCampbellAnthro](#) There are also benefits of enhanced brain development especially frontal lobe and cerebellum, learn to work collaboratively, resolve conflicts and negotiate. Learn decision making skills and explore passions through movement.  
[#brainplaychat](#)



AN HOUR AGO



**UConn CSCH**

@UConnCSCH

Q3. [@JaciVanHeest](#): In your video you talk about PawPALS. How did it begin and how did it work?  
[#brainplaychat](#)



AN HOUR AGO



**Jaci VanHeest**  
@JaciVanHeest

A2: PawPals began in response to a need in a local school. We developed a plan with the principal. It was every morning before school for an hour. Children selected modified games keeping them active. [#brainplaychat](#)

 AN HOUR AGO



**Neag School**  
@UConnNeag

To find out more about [@JaciVanHeest](#)'s PawPALS program, visit [advance.uconn.edu/2004/041115/04...](http://advance.uconn.edu/2004/041115/04...) [#brainplaychat](#) [twitter.com/JaciVanHeest/s...](https://twitter.com/JaciVanHeest/s...)

 AN HOUR AGO



**Neag School**  
@UConnNeag

You can also read Sports Illustrated's 2004 article about PawPALS at [si.com/vault/2004/11/...](http://si.com/vault/2004/11/...) [#brainplaychat](#) [twitter.com/JaciVanHeest/s...](https://twitter.com/JaciVanHeest/s...)

 AN HOUR AGO



**Carol Rodgers**  
@CarolRodgers10

[#brainplaychat](#). Q: Do you feel play has declined due to decreased physical literacy

 AN HOUR AGO



**Jaci VanHeest**  
@JaciVanHeest

[@CarolRodgers10](#) .[@crodgers10](#). Physical literacy and play are intertwined a bit of chicken and egg. Free play would enhance physical literacy and increased physical literacy would allow children to be more comfortable while playing. [#brainplaychat](#)

 AN HOUR AGO



UConn CSCH  
@UConnCSCH

Q4. In the video, [@JaciVanHeest](#) quotes Brad: “when I play I get smarter.” What does executive function mean? What does it have to do with academic performance? And where can we find out more about the research that supports that? [#brainplaychat](#)

AN HOUR AGO



Jaci VanHeest  
@JaciVanHeest

A4: It is a person's ability to organize their thoughts and activities, to prioritize tasks, manage time and make decisions. For all ages, good execution is critical to learning and academic success...  
[#brainplaychat](#) [#brainplaychat](#)

AN HOUR AGO



Jaci VanHeest  
@JaciVanHeest

A2... Number of research articles in education publications. Also research Studies are now focused on physical activity, executive function and academic Success. Journals like mental health and physical activity [#brainplaychat](#)

AN HOUR AGO



UConn CSCH  
@UConnCSCH

Q5. Why is “free play” important as opposed to just exercise or [#PE?](#) [#brainplaychat](#)

AN HOUR AGO



Jaci VanHeest  
@JaciVanHeest

A5: Both are important but free play or unstructured play allows children to be creative, to lead, to explore at their own pace, to express their passion. Sometimes we think of exercise as a JOB!  
[#brainplaychat](#)

AN HOUR AGO



UConn CSCH  
@UConnCSCH

Q6. Everyone: How can we make sure that [#PE](#) and [#recess](#) aren't siloed and seen as separate from academics? [#brainplaychat](#)

AN HOUR AGO



Jaci VanHeest  
@JaciVanHeest

A6: CDC Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child model [cdc.gov/healthyyouth/w...](https://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/wscwc/) is a good place to begin. Think about the links within a school. Communicate develop opportunities to collaborate within school... [#brainplaychat](#)

AN HOUR AGO

A6: A great video to watch to understand the WSCC model is by Dr. Sandy Chafouleas @SChafouleas at [youtu.be/78eunZcSmFw](https://youtu.be/78eunZcSmFw). [#brainplaychat](#)

JACI VANHEEST @JACIVANHEEST · AN HOUR AGO



Carol Rodgers  
@CarolRodgers10

[#brainplaychat](#). Might also suggest bringing activity right into the classroom - enhanced on task behavior - and integrated learning with appropriately chosen activities

AN HOUR AGO





**Jaci VanHeest**

@JaciVanHeest

@CarolRodgers10 .@CarolRodgers10. Programs like Take 10 integrate movement and academic content. #brainplaychat



AN HOUR AGO



**Neag School**

@UConnNeag

Learn more about Take10 at [take10.net](http://take10.net) #brainplaychat [twitter.com/JaciVanHeest/s...](https://twitter.com/JaciVanHeest/s...)



AN HOUR AGO



**UConn CSCH**

@UConnCSCH

Q7. Everyone: Only 1 in 4 kids are getting the physical activity they need. What would it take to get #schools to introduce more #play? Are there any tips for developing a program like PawPALS in schools? #brainplaychat



AN HOUR AGO



**Jaci VanHeest**

@JaciVanHeest

A7: Partnerships and shared goals are essential. Teachers have so many demands so higher ed or other partners are critical. Open dialog with interested constituencies. Help with before, after school or recess programs... #brainplaychat



AN HOUR AGO



**Jaci VanHeest**

@JaciVanHeest

A7... Professors are a resource. Focus on relationships, relationships, develop trust and be passionate. Have a valid plan. Remember people don't 'buy' your idea first, they buy the passionate person behind the idea first. #brainplaychat



AN HOUR AGO



**Carol Rodgers**

@CarolRodgers10

Is the magnitude of positive impact age-related ? #brainplaychat



43 MINUTES AGO



**Jaci VanHeest**

@JaciVanHeest

@CarolRodgers10 .@CarolRodgers10. Play research suggests substantial benefits in children and adolescents. But... benefits are seen at all ages. Personally, that makes me happy! #brainplaychat



40 MINUTES AGO



**Jaci VanHeest**

@JaciVanHeest

@CarolRodgers10 @CarolRodgers10. It is critical that children engage in free play because research has indicated numerous anti-social and negative outcomes if they do not. #brainplaychat



38 MINUTES AGO



**UConn CSCH**

@UConnCSCH

Q8. Let's wrap up on a positive note: How do you see schools or other orgs promoting free #play? #brainplaychat



43 MINUTES AGO



**Jaci VanHeest**

@JaciVanHeest

A8: [shapeamerica.org](http://shapeamerica.org) is a good site for ideas. [Playworks.org](http://Playworks.org) has great recess ideas. There are opportunities to learn more and get involved. Physical literacy is a focus around the world which will change our relationship with movement. #brainplaychat



42 MINUTES AGO



**Jaci VanHeest**

@JaciVanHeest

A8. Physical literacy is the motivation, confidence, physical capacity and personal value of movement. #brainplaychat



42 MINUTES AGO



Neag School

@UConnNeag

ICYMI: Watch [@JaciVanHeest](#)'s video, "The Boy Who Learned How to Play," available at [ow.ly/TioV3oi5L3I](https://ow.ly/TioV3oi5L3I) to learn more about the topics discussed today. [#brainplaychat](#) [#physed](#) [#health](#) [#childhood](#) [#play](#) [#obesity](#) [#healthystudents](#)



44 MINUTES AGO



Neag School

@UConnNeag

For our [#brainplaychat](#) participants, you can learn more about [@UConnCSCH](#) at [csch.uconn.edu](https://csch.uconn.edu) & about [@UConnNeag](#) at [education.uconn.edu](https://education.uconn.edu) — & more about [@JaciVanHeest](#)'s work at [education.uconn.edu/person/jaci-va...](https://education.uconn.edu/person/jaci-va...)



39 MINUTES AGO



Jaci VanHeest

@JaciVanHeest

A take home message for everyone. Get out and PLAY... it will help your thinking, your relationships, and your overall health. Happy PLAYING!! [#brainplaychat](#)



36 MINUTES AGO



UConn CSCH

@UConnCSCH

That's a wrap! Thank you so much for participating in our [#brainplaychat](#) Thank you especially to our co-host [@UConnNeag](#) and to our guest, [@JaciVanHeest](#) [#brainplaychat](#)



35 MINUTES AGO



Neag School

@UConnNeag

That's it for today's [#brainplaychat](#)! THANK YOU to our participants - especially to professor [@JaciVanHeest](#) & our co-host [@UConnCSCH](#)! We'll do our best to get a [@Storify](#) wrap-up of today's [#TwitterChat](#) out soon. In the meantime, have a great day! [#physed](#) [#health](#) [#brain](#) [#play](#) [twitter.com/UConnCSCH/stat...](https://twitter.com/UConnCSCH/stat...)



35 MINUTES AGO