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## Keep the learning going all summer long with the Building Brains game bag

The folks at the University of Lethbridge's [Building Brains Together](#) group have developed a game bag to keep kids learning all summer long while they're having fun.



The bags contain 10 games that help build children's executive function skills and all the supplies needed to play. The games are designed for preschool-aged children to help improve their readiness for kindergarten. The kits are now available and can be ordered online through the University of Lethbridge [Bookstore](#) at a cost of \$29.99.

"We know that play builds those healthy brains and a strong foundation," says Vicki Hazelwood, coordinator of Building Brains. "We want to see kids thrive and the game bags are a tool that we can get into families' hands and equip them to play games that make a difference. We know through the research that these playful activities will help build executive function skills in children."

Games in the bag include Red Light, Green Light, a game that improves children's working memory and helps them build emotional control. Musical Freeze has children dancing to music and, when the music stops, they freeze in the same pose shown on a card. Another activity in the bag is a shared project, where two children work together. The process allows children to plan, negotiate and work together to make whatever they want using modelling clay.

"We know in the first five years of life, a child's experiences have a powerful influence on development, physically, socially and emotionally," says Hazelwood. "So, if they have positive playful experiences with a caregiver in their life, then it really promotes strong and nurturing relationships and it sets them up for positive outcomes in the future."

The Building Brains curriculum and games were sparked by the results of the Early Development Instrument that was used across Canada almost seven years ago to test kindergarten readiness. The results showed Alberta children were behind the Canadian average and children in Lethbridge were behind the Alberta average. Dr. Robbin Gibb, a U of L

neuroscience professor, founded the Building Brains organization and under her leadership, local organizations came together to look at how to strengthen adult capabilities to support childhood development. The curriculum is based on principles of developmental neuroscience and research has demonstrated its effectiveness in helping children learn executive function skills such as self-regulation, working memory and flexible thinking. Children are not born with executive function and the Building Brains activities are an excellent way to practice and build these important skills.

With funding from the City of Lethbridge, Building Brains partners with organizations such as Lethbridge Housing Authority, food banks, the school division and Family Centre to connect with as many caregivers and children as possible.

“We want to see healthy, resilient children in our community,” says Hazelwood. “With these game bags, our hope is to re-invest in continuing the program and supporting healthy child development in our community.”

This news release can be found online at [Building Brains game bags](#).

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