



Eastern Connecticut State University

# NEWS

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**For Immediate Release**  
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## **Eastern Reveals 2015 TIMPANI Toy Study Results**

**Willimantic, Conn.** – Eastern Connecticut State University’s Center for Early Childhood Education announced on Dec. 7 that a wooden cash register produced by Hape Toys has been named the 2015 TIMPANI (Toys that Inspire Mindful Play and Nurture Imagination) Toy.

Now in its seventh year, the annual TIMPANI study investigates how young children play with a variety of toys in natural settings. This year, 10 toys were selected for the study by the center’s faculty and student researchers. The toys were then approved by an advisory committee made up of Child and Family Development Resource Center staff.

The toys were placed in preschool classrooms, and student researchers used hidden cameras to videotape children playing with the toys. Researchers then coded the footage according to the study’s evaluation rubric, which includes four subscales: thinking and problem-solving, cooperation and social interaction, creativity and imagination, and verbalization.

“The TIMPANI study has garnered national media attention across our country, and is used as an educational model in countries as far away as Turkey,” said Eastern President Elsa Núñez. “This international interest is wonderful, but it is not why we conduct this study of preschool toys. We do it to help guide preschool teachers, parents and others in selecting toys for their children that promote intellectual growth, social interaction and creativity. In the process, we have been able to give our early childhood education students an excellent opportunity to conduct empirical research under the tutelage of Eastern’s early childhood education faculty. It turns out that important science is at work, and much can be learned, as we watch children at play.”

The wooden cash register was chosen as this year’s TIMPANI toy for several reasons – it scored highly in all subscales, particularly creativity and imagination and social interaction, and was the highest scoring toy for verbalization. It also scored very highly across age, gender, ethnic

and socioeconomic backgrounds. Heather Oski, a student involved in the study, noted, “Cash registers are often a staple in preschool classrooms, but this one is unique because it’s made of wood and doesn’t make noises or have special effects. It seemed to encourage the children to really use all of its pieces in their play.”

The cash register’s pieces included a credit card scanner, hand scanner and abacus. Kristen Krause, another student involved in the study, noted, “Unique features like the hand scanner and credit card machine were things that drew children to the cash register and helped them develop their play schemes. There was a lot of talking over who got to do what, when and during the sales.

“Children enjoy having the power to pay for things and take ownership with that. They would exchange money and say, ‘this costs five cents,’ or ‘this costs a hundred dollars,’ and pretend to buy things. And then they would agree upon switching roles.”

One interesting finding in this year’s study was the critical role of dramatic play in children’s learning. Jeffrey Trawick-Smith, principal investigator of the study and Phyllis Waite Endowed Chair of Early Childhood Education, commented, “I was not surprised to find that this year’s highest scoring toy was something that could be used in elaborate ways in dramatic play. The quality of young children’s dramatic play is one of the best predictors we have of later school success. When children pretend, they engage in symbolic thought, use complex language, and regulate their own behaviors in mature ways. All of these things are critical to learning. In my view, this toy cash register is one of the most powerful toys we have studied for promoting long-term child development.”

In addition to Oski and Krause, Kimberly DePaolis, Danni Meskill and Alyssa Zebrowski also participated as student researchers. All five students graduated in May 2015.

Previous TIMPANI toys include Paint and Easel (easel by Community Playthings), and Hot Wheels Cars by Mattel (2014); Magna-Tiles by Valtech!, and My First Railway by Brio (2013); Duplo Blocks by LEGO (2012); Tinker Toys by Hasbro (2011); Wooden Vehicles and Signs by Melissa and Doug (2010).

For more information about the TIMPANI Toy Study, contact the Center for Early Childhood Education at (860) 465-0687 or visit [www1.easternct.edu/cece/timpani/](http://www1.easternct.edu/cece/timpani/).

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Disclaimer: The TIMPANI toy study does not consider, nor does it test, the safety of toys. The study makes no claims about the safety of any toy studied. Neither the Center for Early Childhood Education nor Eastern Connecticut State University is liable for any mishaps related to the use of toys mentioned in study findings. Concerns about any toy listed in the study findings should be directed to the Consumer Products Safety Commission.

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Eastern Connecticut State University is the state of Connecticut's public liberal arts university, serving more than 5,300 students annually at its Willimantic campus and satellite locations. In addition to attracting students from 161 of Connecticut's 169 towns, Eastern also draws students from 25 other states and 18 other countries. A residential campus offering 38 majors and 55 minors, Eastern offers students a strong liberal art foundation grounded in an array of applied learning opportunities. Ranked in the top 30 public universities in the North Region, by U.S. News and World Report in its 2016 Best College ratings, Eastern has also been awarded "Green Campus" status by the U.S. Green Building Council six years in a row. For more information, visit [www.easternct.edu](http://www.easternct.edu).