



Eastern Connecticut State University

# NEWS

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**For Immediate Release**

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## **Eastern Reveals TIMPANI Research Results for Best Toy**

**Willimantic, CT** — TINKERTOY construction set, a toy made by Pawtucket, RI-based Hasbro, Inc., under its globally popular PLAYSKOOL brand, has been named the 2011 best Toy to Inspire Mindful Play and Nurture Imagination (TIMPANI). The results of the 2011 TIMPANI Toy Study, to be presented by faculty and student researchers, will be announced at 11 a.m. on Nov. 14 in Eastern Connecticut State University's Center for Early Childhood Education, located in the University's Child and Family Development Resource Center on Eastern's North Campus.

This annual empirical study by Eastern researchers examines how young children in natural settings play with a variety of toys. Toys are selected for TIMPANI study based on recommendations from parents, teachers and faculty.

After the toys are chosen, they are then placed in a preschool classroom for a specified number of days and rated on three subscales: thinking and learning, cooperation and social interaction, and self-expression and imagination. The TINKERTOY construction set received the highest total score.

TINKERTOY construction sets feature easy-fitting, durable plastic pieces to make all kinds of creations. Children can build and play with many different large-scale structures using a design guide for their imagination.

“This year’s findings confirm what we’ve been finding over the years with the TIMPANI study: those basic, open-ended toys tend to be more beneficial to children’s play and learning than some of the more elaborate and commercial toys that are on the market,” said Professor Jeffrey Trawick-Smith, the Phyllis Waite Endowed Chair of Early Childhood Education and the study’s principal researcher. “There’s a reason why TINKERTOY construction sets have been around for more than 95 years — parents, teachers, and children have noticed that the toy has some special qualities that allow children to express themselves, solve problems and interact with their peers.”

“Today’s announcement of the winner of the second Annual TIMPANI Toy Study demonstrates the level of research that is occurring at our Center for Early Childhood Education,” said Eastern President Elsa Núñez. “At the same time that we are identifying and testing toys that promote the intellectual, social and creative development of children, we are also helping our students prepare for careers as professional early childhood educators. I congratulate Professor Trawick-Smith and his students for this ground-breaking research. The investigative work they are doing to build strong foundations for young children will last a lifetime.”

“PLAYSKOOL is thrilled that the TINKERTOY brand was selected as the winner for this year’s TIMPANI Toy Study,” said Jerry Perez, senior vice president, Global Brand Leader, Preschool & Girls Brands. “It is great to see that after 95 years, TINKERTOY construction sets still provide children the tools needed for creative freedom to build what they want, when they want.”

“It was very interesting to see how some toys encourage children to use their imagination, taking something simple to create something very unusual,” said Kelly

Zimmermann, an Eastern graduate student in early childhood education. Zimmerman was responsible for videotaping the toys and coding the videos according to the evaluation rubric. “I think that when looking for a toy that will encourage social interaction and creative play in a preschool classroom, it would be important to make sure the toy is open-ended enough that children can use their own language and ideas to construct and build with the toy.”

Zimmermann and Trawick-Smith will be co-presenting the results of the study at the National Association for the Education of Young Children conference in Orlando on Nov. 3.

For more information on the TIMPANI Toy Study, contact the Center for Early Childhood Education at (860) 465-0885 or visit [www.easternct.edu/cece/timpani.html](http://www.easternct.edu/cece/timpani.html).

For information about PLAYSKOOL, Hasbro, Inc., and its products, visit [www.hasbro.com](http://www.hasbro.com).

CAPTION: TINTERTOY construction set

#### 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 part of the Connecticut State University System (CSUS) and is the state’s designated public liberal arts university. Eastern serves more than 5,600 students each year on its Willimantic campus.