



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date: September 17, 2020

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### **FREE Early Childhood At-Home School Readiness Program to Assist New Orleans-Area Families with School Success**

*Establishes a strong foundation for student learning*

NEW ORLEANS, La. -- [TrainingGrounds](#), in partnership with Family Engagement Lab and Treehouse Children's Museum in Utah, is building on its successful at-home school readiness program — [We PLAY Gets Ready for School](#) — to offer this 10-week program free of charge to 125 children, ages 3 1/2 to 5 years old.

Sponsored in part by the Jack and Jill Foundation, Institute of Mental Hygiene, and Baptist Community Ministries, the *We PLAY Gets Ready for School* program is designed to support families whose children are not enrolled in early learning centers or had their school year interrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic. It is an interactive, hands-on program with virtual activities and supports.

[Online registration is open](#) for the ten week program, scheduled to take place virtually from September 28-December 11. The program will provide high-quality materials to parents and caregivers to assist them in establishing a strong foundation for their children's learning as they prepare to start school. It will place emphasis on developing social-emotional school readiness and language and numeracy skills necessary for school success. Development of these essential skills is guided by the [Skill Building Opportunities and Skill Building Book Tip](#) sheets created by the [Mind in the Making Institute](#) and [Miss Bindergarten Gets Ready for Kindergarten Guided Activity Book](#) created by the [Treehouse Museum](#).

Families will have access to a supportive virtual community and will receive weekly text messages to support learning at home. Children will be given a *We PLAY Gets Ready for School* backpack filled with school supplies (notebook, paper, scissors, glue sticks, crayons, pencils, play dough, and paint) that are essential to developing school readiness skills.

Those interested in the *We PLAY Gets Ready for School* at-home program are encouraged to [register online today](#), as space is limited and will be filled on a first-come, first-served basis.

#### **About TrainingGrounds**

TrainingGrounds is a New Orleans' based non profit founded in 2016 by Christine Neely and Melanie Richardson. TrainingGrounds was created to provide parents, caregivers, and educators with the knowledge and tools to support positive brain development of children, foster positive adult-child interactions, and promote language and cognitive skills in children from birth-to-age-five.

TrainingGrounds uses three approaches — a free innovative and interactive We PLAY Center, Parent Learning Opportunities, and Professional Learning Opportunities — to improve early childhood outcomes throughout the Greater New Orleans area. TrainingGrounds prides itself as an organization that drives impact by partnering with families, educators, and other community

organizations to create quality early childhood learning experiences for children and caregivers. TrainingGrounds' We PLAY Center is a community resource where parents are supported, children are positioned to thrive and a sense of community exists.

To learn more about TrainingGrounds, visit <https://www.mytraininggrounds.org>.

### **About Treehouse Children's Museum in Utah**

Treehouse is a private, nonprofit educational organization. The mission of Treehouse is to be the magical place where children, ages 1 to 12, "Step into a Story®" through interactive exhibits and programs, rooted in the need of all children to make meaningful connections through stories, family literacy activities, and imaginative play.

Treehouse Children's Museum opened its doors in 1992 and has been providing unique educational exhibits and programs to more than 175,000 visitors each year. Visitors to Treehouse are invited to explore the giant tree at the center of the Museum and the other exhibit galleries arranged on two floors. Major spaces and exhibits include the 150-seat Storybook Theater, an "Art Garden" for visual arts and book arts projects, a gallery dedicated to the stories of Utah and another to those of America, a "One World Village" that presents children's stories from eight different countries through miniature houses, a "Heroes Gallery" where children learn about fictional and real heroes, and much more.

For the last 7 years Treehouse Museum has partnered with the creators of the children's book series starring Miss Bindergarten to create and distribute a Treehouse Activity Book to help children prepare for the start of kindergarten. More than 60,000 of these activity books have been distributed since 2013.

To learn more about Treehouse Children's Museum, visit <https://www.treehousemuseum.org/home>.

### **About Family Engagement Lab**

Family Engagement Lab is a national nonprofit organization that increases student learning at home through FASTalk, a text-based tool for teachers that sends curriculum aligned messages to families in their home language. FASTalk's model was developed through innovative partnerships with the Louisiana Department of Education and in California with Oakland Unified School District.

Family Engagement Lab's vision is for every student to have access to meaningful at-home learning opportunities that promote their social, emotional, and academic skill development.

At-home learning supported by families is critical to student success. Parent involvement at home has more than twice the effect on student test scores than parents' education level or socio-economic status (Melhuish, et al., 2008).

Family Engagement Lab is committed to supporting high-need families and communities. 82 percent of students served qualify for free or reduced-price lunch compared to 51.3 percent national average. FASTalk helps families learn strategies to support learning, including: Building critical academic skills, cultivating learning mindsets and habits, and practicing social and emotional skills.

To learn more about Family Engagement Lab, visit <http://www.familyengagementlab.org>.

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## **Contact Us**

Have questions? Email us at [felcommunications@familyengagementlab.org](mailto:felcommunications@familyengagementlab.org).

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