

vroom

Brain building moments

OVERVIEW

Advances in neuroscience confirm what many of us have long known: The first five years are critically important to children's future learning and success. Every time we connect with young children, it's not just their eyes that light up – it's their brains. In these moments, half a million neurons fire at once, taking in all the things we say and do.

Inspired by this compelling research, the Bezos Family Foundation has worked with scientists, community leaders, families and product makers to create Vroom, a new initiative empowering parents and caregivers to play a proactive role in their children's early brain development. Vroom was designed to layer onto the moments that caregivers already have, and give them fun and easy ways to connect with their children and help build their brains.

WHAT IS A BRAIN-BUILDING MOMENT?

Vroom is centered on creating brain-building moments. The good news is parents already have all that it takes to be brain builders, and parents are likely already doing many of the things that promote positive brain development in their children. We've worked with a panel of scientific experts to distill everyday activities that promote brain development into five Brain-Building Basics:

LOOK: Make eye contact so you and your child are looking at each other.

CHAT: Talk about the things you see, hear and do together and explain what's happening around you.

FOLLOW: Respond to your child's words and actions, even before they can talk. When they start talking, ask lots of questions like "What do you think...?" or "Why did you like that?"

STRETCH: Make each moment longer by building upon what your child does and says.

TAKE TURNS: With sounds, words, faces, and actions, parents can go back and forth to create a conversation or a game.

Across all Vroom mediums and materials, content is designed to promote language development, executive functions and "serve and return" interactions between children and adults in their lives – the kinds of interactions we now know develops a young brain, creating a strong foundation by building brain architecture.

THE VROOM APPROACH

No matter their background or socio-economic status, all parents want to be good parents. Vroom makes it easy for any parent or caregiver to have a positive impact on their child's brain development by turning routine, shared moments into brain-building moments. Whether it's mealtime, bath time or anytime in between, there are always ways to nurture our children's growing minds.

Our goal is to support parents throughout their daily journey with affirming, reinforcing messages about brain building by taking advantage of the people and networks parents are already a part of. In communities where Vroom takes hold, brain-building prompts will be found in the home, in the neighborhood and through trusted networks, such as community-based organizations and agencies.

THE VROOM PILOT

Through strong partnerships with community-based organizations, the Bezos Family Foundation launched the Vroom pilot project in Southwest King County as part of the Road Map Project, a Strive community. This pilot program aims to bring Vroom to parents within a geographic region, targeting low-income families who often have the least access to resources.

The pilot project kicked off in April 2014 and will run through mid-summer. Our core objectives are to:

- 1) Test the grassroots distribution model of tools and materials through community-based organizations and other trusted networks.
- 2) Assess resonance of messages and materials with our target audience of low-income parents.
- 3) Measure initial impact through quantitative and qualitative efforts that will capture awareness, attitudinal shifts and behavior change.
- 4) Co-create future tools, based on the feedback, to take to future markets.
- 5) Hone the model for future markets.

PILOT PROJECT TOOLS AND TOUCHPOINTS

Daily Vroom Mobile App: Daily Vroom is a free, beautifully designed smartphone app for Android and iOS. Every day, the app serves up a “Vroom” (a simple brain-building activity) that layers into families’ daily routines. The “Vroom” is age appropriate, contextually relevant and personalized to the child. These tips are scientifically validated with each tip supported by a “Brainy Background” providing the user with the scientific “why” behind each activity.

Vroom Digital: JoinVroom.org serves as a portal for everyone involved in Vroom, highlighting the science behind Vroom, the tools and activities available to parents, and the team that worked to bring Vroom to life. Our social media channels work to build community among parents and caregivers. A new tip is shared each day on Vroom’s social media channels, and parents are encouraged to submit their own tips. Once a parent submits a tip, Vroom adds the “Brainy Background” offering the science behind our everyday moments before sharing them with other parents and caregivers via our mobile app and other digital channels..

Interactions with Community-Based Organizations: We have a tremendous core of 40+ providers including childcare and early childhood education, social services like housing and food, and health and faith centers who have committed to using and giving feedback on Vroom materials during the Vroom pilot project. The materials are flexible enough to be distributed to families through home visits, client appointments, center events, group classes and so many other ways organizations engage their constituencies. On-site at community organization facilities, families will also encounter inspirational and educational Vroom posters and art, featuring photography of real families, an introduction to the Vroom mission and Brain-Building Basics.

Paid Media & Guerilla Marketing: A modest paid media campaign is reaching families with the Vroom message that any moment can be a brain-building moment. The ads, in local newspapers, on buses and around local malls also give contextually relevant tips on what to do with a child in the moment. We have also engaged community members and organizations to bring Vroom messages to life in fun and interesting ways. One such guerilla marketing effort is the take-over of a storefront wall that has historically been a target for graffiti, and its transformation into a community mural about brain-building moments.

VROOM ROLL-OUT

So what's next for Vroom? We will be rolling out Vroom to communities around the nation through community networks and through partnerships with consumer product goods – companies willing to put the messages on their product or package. The early interest from cities and communities is high. We will be responsive to where there is strong demand, and existing infrastructure that Vroom can build on. The timeline for roll-out is in development.

VROOM ADVISORS

We have been so fortunate to be surrounded by experts – true leaders in the fields of child development, neuroscience, and educational and racial equity. We have assembled a team to give us guidance on strategy and on content. We've tapped behavioral economists, people who are thoughtful about movement building, community leaders, and child development experts. Our advisors include:

Dr. Clancy Blair, Professor of Cognitive Psychology
New York University Steinhardt

Dr. Laurie Brotman, Director
Center for Early Childhood Health & Development
New York University Langone

Dr. Geoff Canada, President Emeritus
Harlem Children's Zone

Ms. Ellen Galinsky, President and Co-founder
Families and Work Institute

Dr. Alison Gopnik, Professor of Psychology
University of California, Berkeley

Dr. Megan Gunnar, Director
Human Developmental Psychobiology Lab
University of Minnesota

Dr. Kathy Hirsch-Pasek, Director
Infant and Child Laboratory
Temple University

Dr. Nat Irvin II, Professor of Management Practice
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Ms. Marian Wright Edelman, President and
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