



PRESS RELEASE

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Contact: Allen Hance, 401-965-6594, allen_hance@brown.edu

October 2, 2014

TRI-Lab Presents Symposium on Healthy Early Childhood Development

PROVIDENCE, R.I. [Brown University] -- On Thursday October 2, Dr. Adele Diamond, an international expert on child development and education issues, and cognitive neuroscientist at the University of British Columbia, will join over 200 scientists, policy makers, teachers and child care professionals at a symposium aimed at improving the health, educational performance, and well-being of Rhode Island's children.

Dr. Diamond will provide the keynote address for the day-long event, which will investigate how young children develop "executive function skills." Executive functions enable children to pay attention, follow instructions, apply what they've learned, and have those "aha!" moments about how multiple facts interrelate. As Dr. Stephen Buka, professor and chair of the Department of Epidemiology at Brown's School of Public Health and one of the organizers of the event, observes: "An impressive body of research has demonstrated how early acquisition of these skills influence later mental and physical health, school success, and success in the work place. New research by Dr. Diamond, faculty, students and practitioners in Rhode Island provide exciting new insights into how these skills can be enhanced...or delayed...depending on opportunities and experiences during the preschool years."

The event was organized by participants in Brown University's inaugural TRI-Lab program. TRI-Lab, which stands for "teaching, research, and impact," brings together interdisciplinary groups of faculty, students and community practitioners to focus on a pressing social topic, share knowledge across fields and sectors, and identify opportunities for positive change. TRI-Lab was piloted in the 2013-14 academic year with a focus on healthy early childhood development

issues in Rhode Island and the symposium is jointly sponsored by several of the core participants in the Lab, including Brown University, Rhode Island KIDS COUNT, and Ready to Learn Providence.

The symposium will feature a panel discussion with Rhode Island leaders and practitioners on programs and policies that could enhance the development of executive function skills in young children. Attendees will be provided with a policy brief assembled by the TRI-Lab team, which outlines current research on the topic and identifies opportunities for advancing policy and practice in Rhode Island. Kate Nussenbaum '15, the primary author of the brief, remarked: "There's no magic bullet that will instantly improve kids' executive functions, but there are definitely opportunities for state leaders to integrate research findings into policy and practice to support children's development of these critical skills. For example, expanding access to enriching opportunities like pre-K and preschool and implementing curricula and teaching strategies that target skills like self-regulation could help alleviate the socioeconomic gap in executive functions development."

"The overarching goal of the symposium," said Elizabeth Burke Bryant, executive director of Rhode Island KIDS COUNT and co-chair with Dr. Buka of the TRI-Lab on healthy early childhood development, "is to bring together researchers, policy makers, practitioners and students to better understand how young children learn and grow, as well as how to apply research toward best practices that will improve outcomes for young children."