

Childsplay Theatre

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Arizona's Professional Theatre For Young Adults and Families, Childsplay, is no stranger to receiving awards. The Tempe-based company will soon add another honor to its list of credentials. The Helios Education Foundation named Childsplay one of three grant recipients for having programs paralleled to its Early Childhood Theory of Change.



As Arizona's and Florida's largest nonprofit organization focused on education, Helios Education Foundation's mission is to enhance lives by providing opportunities for success in postsecondary education. The foundation's grants were awarded for programs designed to aid early childhood teachers, professionals, and various providers who work with kids ages birth to five in reinforcing literacy and obtaining knowledge of language and education. The other two recipients, included Paradise Valley Community College, partnered with Central Arizona College, and Florida's Early Learning Coalition of Polk County.

For more than 30 years, Childsplay has used theatre as a medium for education. The company's recognized project creates professional development programs for early education teachers to integrate art into the preschool curriculum using theatre.

Eye Play Project (Early Years Educators at Play) combines drama strategies with reading/writing, creative drama, and dramatic play to provide on-the-job professional development. As a part of Childsplay's Education Outreach Program, Eye Play Project takes a model of professional development and applies it to preschool teachers and staff in order to use informal drama strategies as tools for teaching curriculum the educators already have.

Eye Play Project is currently working with 5th and 6th grade teachers incorporating drama in reading and comprehension of literature. It finds out what teachers are teaching and uses drama to help them teach that subject.

The program does extensive work in schools by placing teaching artists in classrooms to setup residencies for further instruction. Eye Play Project is under the direction of Patricia Black, project director, and Korbi Adams, project manager.

Childsplay was established in 1977 by Artistic Director David Saar. The organization remains one of the Valley's most prominent theatre companies serving more than 200,000 families and students in 2009 alone. The company puts on four productions a year and, along with these performances, Childsplay offers Academy classes.

Individuals and families may visit Tempe Center for the Arts to view a performance where Childsplay is the premier resident company. It also provides tours that travel to schools throughout the state and is currently in its third national tour with Ferdinand the Bull. <http://childsplayaz.org>